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DISCOURSE IN PETERBORO,

FEBRUARY 21, 1858.

WORD has gone out that I am this day to present a new religion: and hence no doubt this unusually large assembly. It is indeed a new religion that I am to present; and yet it is an old one. It is old, and yet it is new. It is the same religion which was preached and lived by Jesus Christ more than eighteen centuries ago. It is the same "faith which was once delivered unto the saints." Thus old is this religion: and yet so little is it preached and apprehended, that it well deserves to be called a new one.

I see, my neighbors, that you are disappointed. You came to this place with your curiosity highly excited to hear about a new religion: and it turns out that I am to tell you of but the old one. I have put a damper upon your raised expectations by announcing for my theme the old religion of Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, is it not a new religion to many of *you*? The commandment that "ye love one another," was in point of fact an old one: and yet Jesus said: "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another." To those whom He addressed it was new.

Do I stir the indignation of some of you by intimating that you are not accustomed to hear the religion of Jesus preached? But when and where do you hear it preached? "Every Sunday," say you. "In all the churches," say you. Well, if this is so, I confess that I am not so fortunate as you are. For very rarely do I hear it. You tell me that the clergymen of this neighborhood preach it. These are good men. I love and

honor them: and I doubt not that they are all in the way to heaven. But if I understand them, it is not the religion of Jesus which they preach. They preach in favor of creeds and churches and a clerical order of men. So mistaken are they, as still to believe that Jesus came to establish all these:—whereas He came to send them all down stream. Blind are they still to the fact, that when His religion shall have come to prevail over the whole earth, there will not one church creed be left; no, nor one clergyman; no, nor one church in the present and popular sense of the word.

A religious creed is proper. Every man should have one. But a church creed is improper. Fifty or a hundred people in Peterboro or Cazenovia, however much alike in their views and spirit, should no more be required to adopt a common religious creed than to shorten or stretch out their bodies to a common length.

There is a sad misconception in regard to a church also. The common idea is, that to make a church people must come together and organize, much as in the case of a Mutual Insurance Company. This is the way a Sectarian church is made. But Jesus no more thought of providing for a sectarian church than for a political party. In His eye the Christians of a place are the church of the place: and this too whether they know it or not, will it or not. They are such by force of their character: and votes can neither make nor unmake the fact.

As to the clerical order. Many clergymen are among the best of men. Nevertheless such an order is wholly unauthorized and exceedingly pernicious. Their assumption of an exclusive right to teach religion makes the teachers conceited, dogmatic, arrogant, tyrannical; and their hearers lazy in mind and slavish in spirit.

The plea for a clerical order is that men learned in religion are needed to teach it. This however is a pagan idea, that has come down to us. To be able to teach a pagan religion—to explain its mysteries and superstitions and absurdities—does indeed require much study of books and much cabalistic learning. Somewhat so is it in the case of the Hebrew religion also. But the religion taught by Jesus is not a letter but a life. So simple is it that the unlearned can both understand and teach it. Even fishermen He pronounced fit to preach His religion. Δγ,

little children can comprehend it. "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise," says Jesus. "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth," says He, "that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." Wise and good men are the teachers in many theological seminaries. Emphatically true is this in the case of the one in our own county. Nevertheless a theological seminary is a mistake. This it is because the current religion is a mistake. The true religion is too simple to make the training of a theological seminary necessary for those who teach it. We should allow the wisdom and goodness of God to assure us that the religion which He has given to the world must correspond in its simplicity with the simplicity of the masses.

Let it not be supposed from what I have said, that I object to the pastorship. Every church should have at least one pastor. He may or may not however have many of the gifts of a preacher.

Every true church of Christ is a simple democracy. Such practically were the primitive churches. Its ordinary assemblies should be mere conferences in which all persons, male or female, are to feel entirely free to speak as the spirit moves them. In this wise are they capable, without having any other preachers than those of their own body, to edify the church, and to glorify God. No Christian should doubt his right to open his lips on such occasions. Faith in Christ is the warrant to speak for Christ. "I believed," says Paul, "and therefore have I spoken." But in addition to this means of grace and growth within themselves, the collective churches should have and should liberally support a powerful itinerant ministry: and this I can say without being inconsistent with what I have said of the simplicity of Christ's religion. The Pauls and Barnabases of modern times should travel among the churches, as did the Pauls and Barnabases of ancient times. The obscurest country church should be favored, as often as every month or two, with a discourse from a Finney, a Beecher, a Lucretia Mott, an Angelina Weld, a Chapin, a Parker, a Beriah Green, an Alonzo Potter, or an Abram Pryne.

But I proceed to add to my reasons for declaring that the clergymen of this neighborhood do not preach the religion of

Jesus. They do not preach it—for they preach that salvation turns on believing in the “doctrines.” I am not blaming them for teaching the divinity of Christ, the atonement, an eternal hell, and the plenary inspiration of the Bible. What I blame them for, is their teaching that they who do not understand and receive these doctrines must perish. I might admit that Jesus taught all these doctrines. But where did He teach that if a man does not understand and receive them, he shall perish? He taught that at the close of this earthly drama men are to be judged by their lives. The great decisive question then will be—not what were your doctrines, but what were your deeds? How did you acquit yourself in regard to those simple duties, opportunities for doing which crowd the whole pathway of both high and humble life, even from childhood to the grave? Did you feed the hungry, and clothe the naked, and welcome the stranger, and visit the sick and the prisoner? In perfect and beautiful consistency with these interrogatories is the Saviour’s declaration: “By their fruits ye shall know them;” and also the Apostles’: “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is to visit the widow and the fatherless in their affliction.”

False tests of character do our clerical neighbors apply in their trying of us by “the doctrines.” In reference to good King Josiah, Jeremiah says: “He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well with him: was not this to know me? saith the Lord.” Says Micah: “What doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly, and love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?” And how emphatically does Jesus make the life the test when He says: “Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you do ye even so to them.” It is honesty, that He enjoins in these words. To be honest is to be a Christian. The most honest man on earth is the best Christian on earth. It is indeed the most comprehensive honesty, that is here required. The spirit, which dwelt in Jesus, can alone inspire it: and strangers are we to that spirit until we are born again. Radical must be the change in our fallen and depraved nature, ere a thorough and gospel honesty can characterize us. I say *fallen* nature. Let me remark that I do not entertain the common views of this subject. Owing to ancestral violations of moral as well as physical and intellectual

laws, we inherit a constitution morally as well as physically and intellectually impaired. This is all I mean by a fallen nature, adding thereto what we may ourselves have done to degrade it.

The clergymen of our neighborhood believe and inculcate that little can be done for a man until he has become thoroughly instructed in and entirely converted to that whole form of doctrine which they regard as vital. This step taken, and his next is to conform his life to the teaching. Now I admit that the creed exerts an influence upon the life:—but it is not so great as that which the life exerts upon the creed. The creed should be left to grow out of the life rather than the life out of the creed. Let a man set out to deal more justly and lovingly with all his fellow men, and he will soon find himself forming a creed, which corresponds with his improved course of life. As his life becomes increasingly pure and beautiful, so will his creed become increasingly sound and comprehensive. In saying that the life influences the creed more than the creed the life, I am justified by the Saviour's declaration: "If any man will do his will he shall know of the doctrine." It is mainly in doing right that we get a right creed.

But it is said that Jesus requires faith, and makes it the condition of salvation. Faith in what? In the doctrines on which our clergymen harp habitually?—I ask again—where does He teach that the want of such faith is fatal? "However this may be," reply our clergymen, "He nevertheless makes faith in Himself essential." I admit it. He says: "If ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins." But just here comes up the great question—what is it to believe in Christ? Is it to believe in "the doctrines?" If so, then the millions of good men, who had never heard of them, nor even of Christ, and the millions too of good men who, having heard of them, had nevertheless mistaken conceptions of them, have perished. But as sure as God is just and merciful, all good men, live and die they in whatever ignorance of the person of Christ or of "the doctrines," are saved. What then is it to believe in Christ? I answer that such belief in its very highest sense is faith in justice, sincerity, mercy, love, and the other moral qualities of which man, be he in Christendom or heathendom, has instinctive knowledge, and for his growth in which, be he in Christendom or

heathendom, he is responsible. These are the qualities, which make up that sum of truth which Jesus came into our world to live to honor and die to magnify: and of which He declares Himself to be the impersonation when He says: "I am the way, the truth and the life." This is the truth of which He spake when He said to Pilate: "To this end was I born and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth." I repeat that to believe in Jesus in the very highest sense is to believe in those virtues which were all clustered in His perfect character: and moreover it is to believe in them so cordially and so constantly as to make them our own, and to prove that they are our own by their blossoms and fruits in our lives. Our lives and our likeness to Christ are the precise measure of our faith in Christ.

I am well aware how contrary to the common view of it is this view of faith in Christ. As is generally held, right apprehensions—adoring, melting thoughts—of His person and personal character constitute pre-eminently true faith in Christ. I would not undervalue such apprehensions and thoughts. He who has them not, even though the life and death of Christ are clearly before him, can give no satisfactory proof that he appreciates the truths which Christ came to teach and illustrate, and no satisfactory proof that he welcomes the duties which He came to enjoin. Nevertheless the Saviour does Himself admit that men may mistake Him and yet be safe. "Whosoever," says He, "speaketh a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him." That is, he shall not be safe who mistakes in regard to the spirit and essence—the soul and substance of religion. If men may err in regard to Christ and yet be forgiven, it nevertheless does not follow that they shall be forgiven, who live in the denial of those vital truths, which the Spirit of God teaches in every heart.

I said that our clergymen make the doctrine of the plenary inspiration of the Bible essential to salvation; and that in so doing they preach not the religion of Christ. But are they not also in error in respect to the fact of such inspiration?

The Bible is really the best book in the world: though the present uses of it make it practically the worst. All other books put together are, not so much as the Bible is, the occasion of

obstructing the progress of civilization and of filling the world with ignorance and superstition. It is adapted as no other book is to enrich the mind and expand the soul. But misapprehended, misinterpreted, and perverted to the extent it is, no other book—nay no number of books—does so much to darken the mind and shrivel the soul.

The clergy make the Bible supreme authority. But our reason is under God the final judge in all questions. The Bible, instead of being used but to enlighten reason, is made to override it. Nevertheless this book, like every other book, is to be regarded as the servant of reason, and not reason as the servant of it. Reason must sit in judgment upon the Bible, as well as upon all things else:—for it is the voice of God in the soul, and nothing must ever be allowed to be exalted above it. In reply to the folly, which makes reason inferior or antagonistic to faith, we declare it to be the basis of all true faith and repugnant to no true faith. Reason, in a word, is religion; and the one duty of every man is to bring his passions and appetites and whole self into subjection to it. The most reasonable person in Peterboro is the best Christian in Peterboro. Most happily chosen is the word where Paul calls religion a *reasonable* service.

But it is said that reason is not competent to pass upon religious questions. Jesus however says it is. "Why judge ye not even of yourselves what is right?" He came to throw men back upon their own consciousness of right and wrong, and to hold them to the deductions and confessions of their own reason. And does not Paul also teach the sufficiency of reason in the first chapter of Romans, (19, 20, 21) ?

It is true that the reason of most men is greatly perverted. It is true that in innumerable instances it is reduced to little better than a compound of passion and prejudice:—or, to speak with perhaps more philosophical correctness, such a compound is allowed to take the place of reason. Nevertheless reason, poor guide though we may make it, is our only legitimate guide. It may lead us to ruin. Still we are not at liberty to give it up for any other leader: no, not for church, nor pope, nor Bible. If we have debased and corrupted our reason, we alone are responsible for the wrong, and we alone must bear the loss. What was due from us when we had a right reason is equally due

from us when we have destroyed or supplanted it. We can not cancel our obligations by our crimes.

Our acknowledgment of the absolute and supreme authority of the Bible is claimed on the ground of its inspiration. But where is the proof that it is inspired? Is it in the assertion to this end of the churches and clergy? Is it to be looked for in what are called external evidences—which by the way are to be searched after in that stream of ignorant and superstitious traditions, which has come down to our age? Oh! no. The proof of the inspiration is to be looked for alone in the pages of the Bible. If not found there, it can be found no where. Moreover, every man must, and upon his own responsibility, judge of the proof for himself.

I do myself believe that most of the writers of the Bible were inspired. All however that I mean by their inspiration is that special flowing of the divine mind into the human mind, of which they enjoy the most, who walk the closest with God. Thus blessed were prophets and apostles. Subjects of this inspiration there are in every age. The sublime pages of Paul prove that he was largely inspired. But he is not infallible. He does not claim to be.

I believe in the Bible. That is, I believe in its great unchangeable principles and everlasting truths, and in all of it which is in harmony with those principles and truths. If there are parts of it, which my reason shall ever teach me are not in such harmony, these I will reject. For these, to use a law phrase, are void for inconsistency, and are no part of the Bible.

In what I said of inspiration, I had no reference to the power to tell future events. What events were foretold by some of the writers of the Bible I can not doubt.

I said that reason has been overridden by the Bible. The vast evil consequences of it no human mind can measure. Why, for instance, is it that slavery is able to make so plausible and effective a defense of itself? It is because its defenders have been allowed to take it out of the jurisdiction of reason, and submit its claims to the Bible. So, too, war and polygamy and the drinking of intoxicating liquors and the wrongs suffered by woman have done not a little to prolong their existence by fleeing from their prompt condemnation in the court of reason to try what they can make for themselves out of certain cunning

interpretations of the Bible. Alas! that it should ever be left to the decision of a book whether these naked and enormous crimes are or are not crimes! For what book is there that men can not read in any and every way to suit their interests? The matchless crime of slavery is instantly condemned by not only the enlightened reason of manhood but the untutored instincts of childhood. How absurd then to submit its character to the decision of pages and philology and exegesis—to the decision, which learning and ingenuity are as like to draw to the one side as to the other!

If men are so low in understanding as to need a Bible to teach them the moral character of the crimes I have enumerated, then are they too low in understanding to be helped by a Bible. Then may Bibles be made as well for donkeys and monkeys as for men.

Who is willing to be a slave? No one. And this proves that the reason of man and the whole nature of man universally condemn slavery. Hence does it prove that if there is any thing in the Bible for slavery, the Bible is so far wrong.

Again, how speedy and certain the conclusion we are brought to by experience, observation, science, study of the laws of life and health, that intoxicating liquors are unfit for a beverage! And who but a very wicked or a very stupid man will appeal from that conclusion to the Bible or to any thing else?

Who too but such a man will ever feel it necessary to go to the Bible to put polygamy on trial? Higher authority and more certain evidence than the Bible have we on this point as well as on the point of rum-drinking. The census tables in all ages and all nations dispose of the question of polygamy. They prove the equal numbers of the sexes, and confirm the declaration of Jesus that God made us "male and female"—only one woman for one man, and only one man for one woman. Whoever therefore gets a plurality of wives robs his brother; and whoever gets a plurality of husbands robs her sister;—just as the people who get two or three farms apiece have made themselves guilty of robbing the landless. By the way, our Government shrinks from putting down its foot upon polygamy where it is made a religious institution. But the province of government is to uphold the great natural rights of its subjects;—and none the less so where the violation of these rights is under the

cover and in the name of religion. The very same obligation rests on government to suppress polygamy that rests on it to suppress land-monopoly. The very same obligation to punish the robbing men of women as to punish the robbing men of land.

Again, let the Bible say what it will of war, who in the light of reason does not condemn it as madness and murder?

And what too, if, as is held by many, Paul does teach that woman as compared with man is an inferior order of being?—who that receives such insane teaching is fit to have a wife or a daughter?

Lest what I have now said might be construed into the admission that these crimes are countenanced by the Bible, I take this occasion to affirm that no one of them finds the least shelter in the principles of that blessed book. Neither the superstitious regard for the Bible and the superstitious assumptions in its behalf on the one hand; nor the assaults, which atheism, skepticism, and ungodly rationalism make upon it on the other, can ever shake the confidence which he reposes in it, who, in the light of a true and therefore reverent reason, has studied the claims of this volume to acceptance, honor, love, and obedience.

I arraigned our clergymen for holding that the doctrine of an eternal hell must be believed in, in order to salvation. For be the doctrine true or false, I can not think that we shall be either saved or lost by any views we may entertain of it. I now arraign them for their undoubting faith in it. No warrant have they either to preach or to entertain a faith in it which is free from all doubts.

I confess—perhaps to my shame and condemnation—that I do not feel a deep and abiding interest in the next stage of our being. Far less concerned am I to know what is the future state than to know and do the duties of the present.

I believe in future punishment. It is a reasonable doctrine. It is philosophically and necessarily true. Every where our character must determine our condition. Every man on dying must go to his own place—to the place for which his character fits him. The death of his body can no more affect his character than the breaking of his spectacles or cane. His body, no more than his spectacles or cane, is a part of himself. That his character will surely remain eternally unchanged, I deny that

any one has the right to affirm. Jude teaches that persons can fall from heaven. Why then may they not rise from hell? For aught we can certainly know, there may be room in the life to come for repentance as well as apostasy. In one sense of "everlasting punishment," I am an undoubting believer in it:—for I can not doubt that the punishment of the sinner will be as everlasting as his sin.

Whilst I confess that I have no certain apprehensions of the kind or degree or continuance of either future punishment or future enjoyment; I nevertheless confidently maintain that enough knowledge for me and for all men on this point is that in the life to come "it shall be well" with the righteous and "ill" with the wicked; and that the "Judge of all the earth will do right," as well there as here. Whilst earth is our home, let us discharge with alacrity and delight the duties of earth. In that way, and in that way only, shall we be fitted for heaven. In that way, and in that way only, shall we get to heaven.

I spoke of the future as a place. I had perhaps better call it a state. That there are millions of heavens and millions of hells—that they are in short as numerous as are the differences in moral character—better answers my conception.

I blamed the clergy for holding that they must perish who subscribe not to the doctrine of the divinity of Christ. For be the doctrine true or false, there is no right to attribute such consequences to its rejection. I also blame them for refusing to admit even the smallest doubt of the truth of the doctrine. In the mind of every man who allows his reason free play there is certainly room for such a doubt. But whether Christ is God or man I leave to be discussed by those who have a taste for speculative discussions. It suffices me to see in Him the infallible teacher of religious truth, the perfect representative and the fullest and most winning expression of His Father. I welcome Him as "God manifest in the flesh." My largest conceptions of wisdom, justice, love are more than realized in Him: and it is my largest conceptions of these and other attributes of Deity, that make up the Deity I love and honor. Surely, if Lady Guion may say: "The providences of God are God," I may say: *The attributes of God are God.*

The mission of Christ to the world was to give all needed extension to the acquaintance of man with God. The heavens

above and the earth beneath ; the instructive course of providence ; and the more instructive teachings of the Spirit were insufficient to this end without the manifestation of God in Christ. Is it said that His mission was to die for the world ? I answer that His death was incidental to His faithful exhibition of His Father's character. It was because He was like God that He was crucified.

The one thing else for which I blamed our clergymen was their making faith in the doctrine of the atonement essential to salvation. But are they not also blameworthy for making themselves so perfectly and stubbornly certain of the truth of the doctrine ?

I am not disposed to controvert the doctrine. In my eye there is none of that absurdity in it, which is so freely imputed to it. For aught I see, it might have been decreed in the counsels of heaven, that a being of Christ's superior dignity must die for man in order that the claims of the law be satisfied ; in order that God "might be just, and the justifier" of man.

But although I make no opposition to the doctrine, nor even object to being numbered with those who subscribe to it, I nevertheless can not feel, as do many, that it is true beyond all possible question. Moreover, I can not see why I should love and honor Christ any the less, if it shall turn out that the law, instead of being satisfied by the righteousness of Christ, is satisfied by the righteousness, which His spirit has wrought in them who love him. That Christ lived and suffered and died for men is abundant reason for their giving Him all possible love and honor, without their stopping to calculate what they have gained by Him. Moreover, it is the privilege of every good man to know that the claims of the law against himself are satisfied. The fact that he is good—that he loves God and man—is the highest possible proof he can have that they are satisfied. Paul closes his enumeration of virtues with the declaration : "Against such there is no law." No more can there be law against him who is adorned with these virtues. Admitting the doctrine of the atonement to be certainly and entirely true, nevertheless the importance of our understanding and believing it is greatly overrated. But the importance of our believing that Jesus lived, and suffered, and died for man is in no danger of being overrated :—for, thus believing and understand-

ing, our hearts are drawn out in love to Him, and to the truth, and to our fellow-men, and to our Father. This is the needed effect upon us of the Advent. But on what precise principles it is, and whether by any of the supposed expedients or technicalities that our accounts in the books of heaven are balanced, is a matter we may safely leave among "the secret things which belong unto the Lord our God."

Again, I can not, because Paul seems to inculcate the doctrine of the Atonement, feel entirely certain that it is true. He says but little of it except in his letter to the Jews:—and in what he says of it to them, he is perhaps more swayed by his and their common education than by any revelations or inspirations. We must not forget that the Jewish education was full of atoning sacrifices. From early childhood the Jew was taught to believe that the animal killed in sacrifice atoned for the sins of an individual or a family. How natural then was it for Paul to speak to his countrymen of Jesus, who did indeed die for the world as One who had atoned for the sins of the world! Thus natural was it for John to say, as he looked upon Jesus: "Behold the lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!" He virtually said: "Behold not the literal lamb which taketh away the sin of but an individual or a family: but behold the figurative lamb—the lamb of God—which taketh away the sin of the world!" If the atonement of Christ is but a mere fancy, it is nevertheless not strange that a Jew should entertain it. So fully possessed was he of the idea of atonement, that it must have been very easy for him to fancy a sufferer for another to be an atoning sufferer.

I do not forget that the animal sacrifices are what is most relied on to prove the truth of the doctrine of the atonement. Those sacrifices do indeed seem to be meet offerings to a cruel, bloody pagan God. Moreover, according to Paul (Heb. 10 : 6) Jesus testified that His Father had "had no pleasure" in them; and according to Jeremiah (7 : 22) God Himself declared that He "commanded them" not. Still it must be confessed that there is a vast amount of evidence in the Bible that God did command these sacrifices. If however we must yield to this evidence, it nevertheless remains to be proved that they are types of the sacrifice in which the Lord Jesus offered up Himself. May not a man be good and yet doubt the sufficiency of the

proof to this end? One thing more under this head. Instead of the vulgar view of the atonement, may not Christ be regarded as in effect an atoning sacrifice because He saves men from the penalty of the law by the converting influences, which flow out upon them from his life and death?

But I will weary you no further with words about "the doctrines." My neighbors, we are all aware that a low place in the ecclesiastical world is assigned to Peterboro. For many, many years, we have been giving great offense to the clergy and the churches. And yet, I must think, that this little village—probably the only spot in the State to which the Anti-Slavery Society, that was mobbed out of Utica nearly a quarter of a century ago, could retreat in safety—is, in respect to a sound and rational religion, greatly in advance of almost every other place in the land. Our families with certainly very few exceptions dwell together in peace and love; and in this there is no little proof that the religion of Jesus prevails among us. No little proof also of this is there in the fact that a great many years have passed away since intoxicating drinks were openly sold among us: and no little proof too in the fact that the filthy vice of snuffing, chewing, and smoking tobacco is held by a large share of our people to be disgraceful and sinful. And where I ask most emphatically is there a place in all our broad land so free as this from the spirit of caste? Whose table is there here to which a black man is not as welcome as a white one? When I heard the other day that our respectable youth of white faces and black faces had mingled together freely in a public dance, I confess (although I am not the advocate of public as I am of private dances) that I felt proud of my village. Where else in our country has the religion of Jesus achieved a conquest so beautiful, so decisive, and so much needed? Ignorant and unsound as we are held to be in regard to "the doctrines," nevertheless are we not quite as far advanced in humanity and practical Christianity as the places where every hair's breadth of the most orthodox interpretation of doctrines is contended for?

There is a wide-spread revival of religion in our country. Of what religion time alone can surely tell. It is not Christianity, if it shall allow the rich to stand aloof from the poor, and the people of one complexion to refuse to associate with the

people of another. It is not Christianity, if it is like the current religion. For the terms which this religion keeps with slavery and with the murderous prejudice against the colored races proves it to be a spurious and Satanic religion. Why, the very first lesson in the school of Christ is to know our brother and sister, and to see Christ in every man, woman, and child, be they rich or poor, white, red, or black. The religion, which does not go to bind together all human hearts is not the religion of the Saviour. A poor opinion of this revival shall I have, if there shall still be as much opposition as ever to negro suffrage; and as great unwillingness as ever to mingle complexions in the school and church; and as great readiness as ever to cast votes for pro-slavery men.

Another delightful evidence to my mind that the spirit of Christ has wrought great and blessed changes in Peterboro is to be found in the breaking up of our sectarian churches and in the general and growing dislike to sectarianism. God hasten the day when, here and elsewhere, there shall no longer be Christians, who shall not be deeply ashamed to be called Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, or to pass under any other religious party name!

But were I to go on and speak all the praises of Peterboro, I should still be obliged to confess that she is very far from perfect; that there is still much in her to be reformed; and that she greatly needs the priceless blessing of a revival of true religion. Never will our village be what it should be, until love shall reign in all our families and all our hearts; until an altar to God shall be erected in all our homes; and holiness to the Lord be inscribed upon all our business and all our amusements.

My hearers, the great struggle between the religion of authority and the religion of reason has begun. It did not begin with Martin Luther and the early Protestants. They were still creed-bound; and their enslavement to the Bible differed not essentially from enslavement to the Church. This struggle is chiefly the growth of the last half-century; and in America nothing has contributed to it so much as the Temperance and Anti-slavery reforms—since nothing so much as these has awakened a sense of human dignity and human rights, and called for a common-sense and practical religion. The Protestants are wont to disparage the Catholics. Nevertheless the mass of the

Protestants are with the Catholics in favor of a religion of authority and against the religion of reason. At this point they are essentially alike. For what submission is there to the Catholic Church which is more degrading or dwarfing than that which Protestants are so inexorably required to yield to the ecclesiastical interpretations of the Bible?

We are living in an age of great progress—great progress in the material, mental, and moral world. Every thing is going forward and improving except ecclesiastical religion. That remains stereotyped and unchangeable. But we thank God for the abounding evidence that it will ere long give place to another and better religion. Already are there dawns of that glad day when the superstitions and absurdities, which have so long debased and tormented men, shall have passed away forever; and when Christianity in all her reasonableness and righteousness shall overspread the whole earth.

Alas! how little has been accomplished by these superstitions and absurdities for the glory of God and the good of man! War, slavery, land-monopoly, polygamy, drunkenness, the wrongs of woman still remain. The religion of reason—that religion which says to man, “Yea, and why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?” had long ago done away with these evils, and turned this sin-smitten, priest-ridden, superstition-bound world into a paradise.

It is often said that we, who are busy in reducing religion to reason, are busy, at least in effect, to overthrow it. But to bring religion into identity with reason is not to degrade but to exalt it. And again, it is not we who endanger religion, but they who reduce it to a superstition. There is indeed danger that men will break loose from the Bible. But this danger springs mainly from the fact that rapidly increasing multitudes will no longer consent to bow their necks to a religion of authority and receive the Bible because it is the Bible rather than because their reason has indorsed it. If this book shall be cast aside as a superstition, it will be because its friends are unwilling that reason and reason only shall pass upon it and interpret it. The truth is that the civilization of Christendom is fast outgrowing the religion of Christendom:—and this is because reason is allowed to infuse itself more and more freely into civilization, whilst it is still driven away from the precincts of religion.

No where probably are the people more ready than they are in Italy to reject the current Christianity. And this because no where is the current Christianity more emphatically a bundle of superstitions, and because no where is it more industriously and superstitiously urged upon the superstition of the people. As an additional reason, no where else are the people opening their eyes faster to the religious impositions practised upon themselves. In a word, Italy has outgrown her religion. Her limbs have become too big for her garments. Italian civilization is far in advance of Italian Christianity.

My hearers, who among you will to-day espouse this religion of reason—this manly and common-sense religion of the lips and life of Jesus? You had been told by great sticklers for doctrines, that a very accommodating religion would be presented to you on this occasion—a sort of heaven-made-easy religion. I beg you to make trial of the religion, which I have now presented to you. Try to bring your entire self under the reign of reason; and then you will know that your task is not an easy one. Then you will know that only he who is born again is adequate to it. Then you will know that only he who has been imbued with the spirit of Christ, and has chosen Christ for his master and Saviour, is capable of submitting his whole being to the demands of reason. Let me not however be misunderstood. Notwithstanding what I have just said, this religion which I commend to you is not a hard one. It is hard to get. But when once gotten it is easy. When by the grace and help of God the yoke of Christ is once upon your neck, you will find it easy, and His burden light.

We who inculcate this religion of reason must lay our account with great opposition, not to say virulent persecution. Because we can not "frame to pronounce" the Shibboleth of the churches and clergy we are called infidels. It is the bad fashion of the age—it has been the bad fashion of every age—to apply doctrinal tests of character, instead of judging men "by their fruits." But never is it reasonable or Christian to go back of the life to judge of the character. To do so is to be guilty of wicked intolerance. If we regard our neighbor's doctrines as unsound, and are nevertheless constrained to acknowledge his pure and loving and beautiful and reverent life, then instead of condemning him for his unsound doctrines, we are

to do him double honor for that goodness of his heart, which maintains itself in the face of the errors of his understanding: and, what is more, we are to thank God for consenting to dwell by His spirit in a heart, which is coupled with a wrong head.

I close with reminding my fellow-laborers, that as we are now embarked in the most difficult of all reforms, we are under especial need of remembering Him whose name is "Strength." Dismayed and overcome we surely shall be, unless our hearts go out constantly for His support. When a quarter of a century ago, we had to encounter a very strong anti-temperance and pro-slavery public sentiment, we had fainted unless we had made the Lord God our help. But then the churches were divided and the clergy also. No very small share of them were with us. Far different is it now when we have to breast the well nigh entirely undivided forces of both churches and clergy, and all that appalling public sentiment, which such forces are able to generate. In our determination to resist the mad intolerance, which judges character by those ever harped-on doctrines about which even among the best of men there will ever be as many minds as there are differences of temperament and education; and in our determination to acknowledge no other test of character than the life, we may be sure that we shall not fail to provoke such an array against ourselves, as will be utterly overwhelming, if we put not our trust in the living God. Brave then let us be to meet the frowns of our fellows: but all the while let us be meek and humble in the consciousness that our bravery will die, and our cause be defeated, unless we keep our hearts in contact with the Divine heart, and draw from thence the courage and strength, which that great heart can alone supply.

DISCOURSE IN PETERBORO,

JANUARY 23, 1859.

A YEAR ago I gave you a discourse in favor of the religion of reason. To-day I give you another. That discourse, wherever it circulated, was severely criticised, and this will probably experience no more tender treatment than did that.

Were men but mere machines, they could reflect but little honor on their Maker. It is because they are free agents—free to choose to know God, and free to be ignorant of Him—free to grow either in likeness or unlikeness to Him—that they are capable of doing Him large honor. That day, if it shall ever come, in which all the intelligent creatures of His universe shall choose this divine knowledge, will realize our present conceptions of the highest possible glorification of God. For the power of this knowledge is to produce in all who choose it likeness to Him: and likeness to Him is the greatest honor that can be rendered to Him. Indeed, so far as we can see, is not the making of this likeness perfect and universal, the one work of God and of all who through His renovating grace become “workers together with Him?” The prophet says: “And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver.” A beautiful fancy connected with these words is that as the silversmith has sufficiently purified the metal when it is brought to reflect his face perfectly, so God will be satisfied with the progress of a human character when He shall see in it his own.

As, then, our likeness to God is the highest honor we are capable of yielding Him, so, to grow in this likeness, should be

our incessant and absorbing aim. That it is also our own highest enjoyment is manifest. Though of this we are to make comparatively trivial account. Since there is no other way in which we can so unequivocally and fully testify our regard for our earthly friend, as in studying his character, and copying his virtues, so the best praise we can offer God is that likeness to Him which results from our deep interest in his character through our knowledge and love of it.

That the one great duty of life is to grow in resemblance to God, was deeply felt by the Psalmist, when he exclaimed: "I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness." Nor less deeply was it felt by the Apostle, when prompted to say: "We know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him."

The law of our assimilation to the ruling interests of our hearts operates no less surely and rapidly in upward than in downward directions. All see how certain and swift is the miser's process for shrivelling his soul. All see that the sensualist sinks his whole nature to the level of his sensuality. All see that the character of the ambitious man derives its color and cast from no higher objects than those which come within the range of his ambition. But no less true is it that he who makes God his study and desire becomes godlike. He discerns, comprehends and conforms to the divine principles. Thankfully and joyfully does he fall in with the divine methods and arrangements. Habitually and impressively does his life reflect much of the divine wisdom and beauty. Thus does he go forward, fulfilling the one grand purpose of his existence—assimilation to his heavenly Father—until, at length, his heart freed from all evil, and his intellect emerged from all darkness, he stands like the Angel of the Apocalypse in the very sun.

That likeness to God results from knowing Him, is taught by the Apostle when he says: "We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." To know God is to love Him; and we can not love Him without being like Him. How, then, we can best study the Divine character to the end that our own shall most resemble it, is the great problem which every man is to solve, and with the practical solutions of which he is to make beautiful and blessed every day of his life.

The sun, moon and stars, and the globe we inhabit, are all witnesses for God. Innumerable other sources are there which

flow with divine knowledge. The whole course of providence testifies that God is strong and wise and good. Very emphatic is such testimony through those men and women who, here and there in all ages, have by their large partaking and faithful illustration of the Divine Spirit taught the world the character and excellence of that Spirit. Prophets there have been whose mighty words and sublime lives were rich manifestations of God. High above them all is his "beloved Son," Jesus, "full of grace and truth," Jesus, "filled with all the fullness of God," Jesus, such an incarnation of the divine wisdom and goodness and loveliness, such a matchless exhibition of the divine character as made it no exaggeration in the Apostle to call him "God manifest in the flesh." "Looking unto Jesus," unto this brightest and fullest expression of God, is preëminently the means for increasing in the knowledge, love and likeness of God.

Thus abundant are the means for acquainting ourselves with God. We can not remain ignorant of Him if we are disposed to study Him. We may know Him, if we will, and as we have already said, to know Him is to love Him and be like Him. The diligent and honest student can learn "by the things that are made," what is that perfect law that converts the soul. But in the words and lives of prophets, and above all in the words and life of Jesus, he can learn it more surely, comprehensively, and accurately.

Such are the circumstances of men. Now, which in these circumstances is the religion best adapted to promote their likeness to God? There are but two religions in the world. One is that of nature or reason; and the ten thousand varieties of the other all come properly under the name of the conventional or doctrinal religion.

I made preëminent the "looking unto Jesus." I might with truth have said that it surpasses the sum total of all other means for producing likeness to God. But alas! the religious world, instead of "looking unto Jesus," is chiefly busy with the doctrinal systems and questions which sectaries and creed-mongers have coupled with his name! Immeasurably more important do they count it to have orthodox views in regard to the trinity, the atonement, and the future life, than to imbibe the spirit of Christ and to submit all the relations and departments and duties of life to the sway of his principles.

The prevalent idea is that Jesus introduced a new religion, and made essential to salvation faith in his Godship, the atonement, and in other doctrines peculiar to that religion. But he did not.

The religion which Jesus so perfectly illustrated with his lips and life was no other than the religion of reason—that one and only true religion which is adapted to all ages and all peoples, and which stands opposed to all those fabrications of the cunning, and all those superstitions of the credulous, which are called religion. These fabrications and superstitions, and, in short, every other religion than that of reason, Jesus confronted. No cabalism or mysticism found any favor with him. The religion he taught was so obviously true as to make its appeal to natural sense and universal intuition. So simple was it that he found no occasion for sending men to books and priests to acquire an understanding of it. On the contrary, he put them upon their own convictions for the solution of its problems, and asked them: “Why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?” He found reason outraged by monstrous claims in the name of religion: and the one work of his ministry—the one work which, amid all the storms of passion and prejudice and bigotry he pursued so unfalteringly and calmly and sublimely—was to reëstablish the dominion of reason. He found common-sense reduced to a ruinous discount by its concessions to religious tricks and fooleries; and he undertook to restore it to par. Such was then and is now the whole of the religion of Jesus. It is a common-sense religion. Wide as is its realm, it is but commensurate with common-sense, and one with it. To bring the whole man and the whole life under the reign of reason is its sole office. The true religion is nothing more nor less than a “reasonable service;” and wherever there is the most reasonable man, there is the most truly religious man.

We denied that Jesus made faith in certain doctrines essential to salvation. Nor is it true that he made faith in his literal self thus essential. What he means by faith in himself is faith in the Christ principle and Christ character. Hence, salvation may come to him who has never heard of Christ. Cordially to believe in that principle of divine goodness, and truly to possess the character which grows out of this cordial belief, is the sufficient, ay, and the sole salvation.

The church and priesthood will nevertheless long continue to hold that this faith in doctrines is essential. For, beside the force of habit in the case, they will hardly be insensible to the fact that their surrender of the necessity of this faith would involve the surrender of themselves. When the true religion shall prevail, and men shall be judged by their life and character rather than by their adoption or rejection of creeds, the church, in the common-sense of the word, will have disappeared, and the priesthood have lost its vocation. When there shall be no more battles to fight concerning the doctrines, there will be no more occasion for sectarian churches; and when religion shall require only a good life and a good character, the learning peculiar to a priest will be as superfluous for the cure of souls as is that of a geologist to teach the farmer how to hold his plow, or that of a lawyer to negotiate the simple exchange of a bushel of wheat for a piece of meat. Every other religion must have its priesthood, for a scholastic training is necessary to unravel its knots. Every other religion must have an order of men capable of exploring its mysteries. But in the religion of Jesus there are no knots and no mysteries. I admit that both heaven and earth are full of mysteries. Paul, in writing to Timothy, refers to some of them. But I deny that any of them come within the range of the true religion. All its essential teachings are intelligible to common-sense. Nay, simple love is the fulfilling of its whole law. Hence, this religion needs no priesthood, unless it be that "royal priesthood" in which there are no grades, and to which every disciple, however learned or unlearned, belongs. How different this religion, the disciples of which are each his own priest, from those religions which require a sacerdotal caste to study their volumes, their legendary and mystic lore! How different from those religions which require a class of magicians because the religions themselves are magic!

Nothing can be more absurd than to make faith in the doctrines the pivot of salvation. For this is to make such faith the test of character, since it must turn exclusively upon our character whether we are saved or lost. But such faith is not absolutely subject to our control, and therefore can not be a test of character. To the unqualified proposition that men can not, and are not, bound to govern their beliefs, I confess I do not

assent. Every man is bound to believe that goodness is goodness, and wickedness is wickedness—for this he can do if his moral affections are right, and it is in his power to have them right. But when the question is one of the understanding rather than of the heart, then owing to constitutional or educational differences, one man will believe and another disbelieve; one man will come to one conclusion, and another to another. Hence, while a person must not be excused for saying he can not believe it wrong to lie and steal, he may be for not seeing sufficient evidence to warrant the popular view of the atonement and of the Trinity. Unbelief in the one case is necessarily connected with a wicked heart. In the other, it may exist in connection with the holiest heart.

The conventional or doctrinal religion is not adapted to make men good. It teaches that we must believe the doctrines in order to be good, and that it is illegitimate and vain to seek to become good in any other way. Hence, they who receive this teaching, instead of trying to be good, try to believe the doctrines. Hence, too, they are not expected to be good, and do not themselves expect to be good until they have believed them. Again, many may never be able to believe them: and again, many give abundant proof in their lives that the doctrines may be believed without making the believer good. Moreover, whatever the goodness of those who are so strenuous for the doctrines, there is generally coupled with their strenuousness the uncharitable condemnation of all who are unable to believe them; and this intolerance is, to say the least, a great blemish and drawback upon their type of goodness. Only here and there is it that the goodness of these excessively doctrinal religionists rises above this intolerance.

Absurd, indeed, is it to require men, on peril of perdition, to subscribe to certain explanations of certain facts in religion. The fact that Christ died for us, all agree to. But it is held that we are as much bound, and that it is as important, to agree to certain speculations about it, and to certain systems of faith built upon it, as to the fact itself. Again, we are agreed that Christ spoke the words of his Father. But it is held that we must perish unless we can bring ourselves to the conclusion that he was, in respect to all the essential attributes of Deity, one with his Father. The fact, too, that we shall in

the next life find it well with the righteous and ill with the wicked, and that all should cherish a deep and abiding sense of their accountability, is denied by none of us. But in vain, too, is all this, unless we subscribe to certain views of heaven and hell.

As well may it be said that a man must not plow, nor sow, nor reap, until he can understand how his crops grow, as that he must not enter upon a religious life and expect to be good until he can comprehend the doctrines and philosophy of religion. At many points in them the most learned, wise, and holy differ widely. The masses, of course, do. Indeed, it is not expected that they should comprehend these things. Their faith in them, as all honest theologians will readily admit, is not expected to be comprehensive and intelligent, but only narrow, superstitious, blind.

I have not been arguing that the prevalent doctrines and philosophy of religion are false and worthless. There is much of truth and value in them. All I insist on is that the importance of a full and precise knowledge of them is overrated; and that mistakes in regard to them are not necessarily fatal. For instance, a man may be good, and yet not see that he who "*increased in wisdom and in favor with God,*" and who "*learned by the things he suffered,*" and who confessed his *ignorance* of the times of future events, is the all-wise and unchangeable God. A man may be good, though he can not see the reasonableness of the theory of the twofold nature of Christ, and consequently can not be able to reconcile with absolute divine perfection, either this want or this growth of knowledge. Again, a man may conceive that God can delegate to Jesus or another agent power enough to enable him to build a world; and he may acquiesce even in the giving of the name of God to him who wields this great power of God. Nevertheless he may shrink from admitting the agent to be the very God. So, too, he may feel it proper to worship Christ, although unconvinced that Christ is the one God. For he may hold that truth, wherever it is, is worthy to be worshipped; and that in Christ is its perfect personification. Now, I do not say that this man is right in all, or even in any of this. But I do say that however wrong he may be in it, he may nevertheless be good. Another thing I would say is, a man may be good, and yet not fall in

with all the popular views of the atonement. He may see that suffering one for another, even to the laying down of life, is altogether reasonable. But that God should be angry with his children, and should require an innocent victim to appease his wrath, may strike him as an exceedingly unreasonable part of the ecclesiastical machinery. It may strike him as turning the loving Father into a bloody pagan deity. A man may be good, and yet believe that the hearty repentance of the sinner is of itself sufficient ground for his forgiveness. He may even believe that Jesus teaches this in the parable of the prodigal son.

That the early Christians interpreted the atonement as a majority of modern Christians do, is perhaps true; for such interpretation would be a very natural outgrowth of Jewish education. Beautiful and impressive to the Jew must have been the analogy, however real or fanciful, between the literal sacrifice and Christ—between the lamb slain for the sin of an individual or a family, and “the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world.” The argument for receiving and relying on Christ derived from this analogy must have been very imposing to the Jewish mind.

But it is said that all this philosophy, and all these doctrines, were taught by Jesus. If they were, it does not follow that our misapprehensions of them would make our salvation impossible. But how can we be sure that they were all taught by him? The Bible can not make us entirely sure of it. For it is, at the most, a record of but the substance of what Jesus spoke—certainly not always of his precise words. He did not write them. Nor were they written as they fell from his lips; nor probably until many years after. Hence, we may not have so much as the substance of what he said in every recorded instance. The idea that the authors of their respective parts of the Bible were moved by God to write, word by word, and that, by a perpetual miracle, every word has been preserved from all possible change in itself and in its connections, is quite too superstitious and absurd to be entertained by any reasonable mind. Another fact of great account in interpreting the Bible is, that Jesus was a poet, and that few poets have ever spoken so figuratively and hyperbolically. They who mistake his picture-language for words of philosophical precision will be liable to construe him very absurdly. Let me not be taken as under-

rating Jesus by calling him a poet. The poet is the superior being. He deals with the essence and soul of things—common minds with but their body and phenomena.

But to return to the chief duty inculcated in this discourse—growing in likeness to God. In saying that this is to be attained by “looking unto Jesus,” I did not mean that superstitious looking, which expects in return the magic transformation of the looker, but that rational looking to his principles, virtues, spirit, life, which is accompanied by the deepest yearnings of the soul to make them all our own. It is in this wise that we become like Christ; and likeness to Christ is likeness to God. For notwithstanding his repeated acknowledgment of inferiority to the Father, he claimed that he is one with Him. If he is not the Father, nevertheless he has the spirit of the Father. That he is not the Father otherwise than in spirit and character, is, perhaps, inferable from his prayer that his disciples may become one even as he and the Father are one. But the oneness of his disciples can be no further than in spirit and character.

How insulting to God and degrading to man is this sacred sorcery which is put in the place of the religion of reason! How false every view of the new birth, (which I admit whoever is saved must experience,) that makes it either more or less than a new character! How foolish and fanatical every expectation of a salvation, which does not consist and prove itself in a new and good life! But that a new character and a new and good life are not what the mass of religionists understand by the salvation of which they profess themselves to be subjects, is manifest from the fact that in character and life they are undistinguishable from others. They are no less enslaved to party than are others; and such enslavement is among the very strongest proofs that the subject of it moves upon a low plane of being, and is unfitted for a higher. It has often occurred to me that as the palæontologist has his Silurian and Old Red Sandstone periods, his Carboniferous and other formations in which to pursue his study of fossil plants and animals, so they, who thousands of centuries hence shall write the history of man, will also break up the past into large divisions. Instead of the petty distinction of a Greek or Roman age, they will grasp under one name ten thousand and twice ten thousand years. What name will they give to our times? What

else can it be than the age of party? It promises to be a long age. It has already run through several thousand years; and judging from the present sway of party, there is a much longer race before it. How the palæontologists gloat over their discoveries! But far greater will be the joy of these historians when, in digging for their fossils, they shall strike upon such a rich specimen of party architects and party magicians as a Van Buren, a Buchanan, or a Douglas! or upon an eminent Presbyterian or Methodist, or other sectarian leader!

Hasten, O God, the coming of the age of individualism! that age in which men shall scorn to work for party, and to be helped by party; in which they shall identify themselves with all mankind and work for all mankind, and aspire to no better lot in life than their individual merits under Heaven's blessing can earn for them!

I said that our religionists are generally the slaves of party. Ask them, for instance, to help you put a stop to sectarianism; to help you overcome that monster who drags down and dwarfs so large a share of the whole human family—and you ask in vain. They prefer adhering to their religious parties, and remaining in their Baptist, Episcopal and other sectarian inclosures, to identifying themselves with all the friends of righteousness. In a word, they prefer gratifying a narrow and party spirit, to cultivating one that is broad and catholic. Entreat them to help you elect law-makers who will shut the dram-shop, and thereby dry the tears of tens of thousands of wives and mothers, and make murder, and the blasphemies of drunken lips and other great crimes, comparatively rare, and in the face of your entreaties they will cling to their political party, and vote for rum-drinkers and rum-sellers, and rum-makers. Or if you entreat them to take pity on the fugitive slave, and wield their political power against kidnappers, you will find how much stronger is their attachment to party than to freedom and justice and mercy; and how much more ready they are in this case, as well as in others, to go with the majority against Christ, than with the minority for him. These who are doctrinal rather than Christlike Christians, have a great horror of minorities. Their professed Master, when hanging on the cross, and deserted by all His disciples, was reduced to a minority of one. But these doctrinal Christians have no taste for this lonely condi-

tion. Indeed they will steer as wide as possible of all minorities, and for the surest majority. Christians bent on being in the majority! What a solecism! The Bible says: "Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil." It might say more. In this world of abounding wickedness, the multitude can not be followed without doing evil.

What a sad exhibition of party spirit among professing Christians was there at the last election! The religious press and the temperance press called on the people to vote for candidates who were willing to let the dram-shop continue its work of death, and the kidnapper prowl after his prey through the whole length and breadth of our State! I recollect that one of the religious newspapers made an especial and very urgent call on *praying* men to vote for them. The excuse of the religious conscience for voting for such candidates is, that they can be elected, and that candidates who stand up for God and humanity can not be! Will Christians never learn that, instead of voting for candidates who are on the side of wrong, they are bound to do all they honestly can to cripple the power and reduce the influence of such candidates! Have I a bad neighbor? Then it should be as much my object to contract the sphere of his injuriousness, as to enlarge my good neighbor's sphere of usefulness. All this is obvious in the light of a reasonable religion. But alas! the current religion is divorced from reason!

A sad spectacle, indeed, was that to which I have referred. So far as our State was concerned, all interest in freedom and temperance had nearly died out. Their professed friends had, with very few exceptions, gone into the political parties. They were no longer professing to abolish Slavery; but they were contenting themselves with idle talk against its extension. They no longer proposed to shut up the dram-shop; and though they did not altogether cease to speak for temperance, yet were the words of most of them vague and heartless, and more fitted, and doubtless more intended to veil their apostasy, and mitigate their consciousness of it than to accomplish any good for the great reform. In these circumstances a handful aroused themselves to save, if possible, these precious causes from utter extinction. They taxed themselves heavily to hire halls and presses in which to make their appeals to their old fellow-laborers. But all in vain. The dram-shop and kidnapping were

never before so triumphant. The Christianity of the State took the side of these *institutions*. It went exultingly with the sweeping majority, and laughed at and despised the little minority. But, thanks to God, such a Christianity is a counterfeit. If it were not, then would the real Christianity be as poor and detestable a religion as was ever imposed on human credulity.

I referred to the fact that these professed friends of temperance, even while stabbing it to the heart, had the effrontery to talk for it. They talk for it still ; as much since the election as they did before it. They hold meetings and resolve in favor of the suppression by Government of the sale of intoxicating drinks. All this, too, with as much of an air of sincerity and solemnity as if their votes had always corresponded with those talks and resolves.

I confess my alarm at these things. For, manifestly, this machinery of Temperance Societies and Temperance Agencies, by which these cunning men have served party purposes at the expense of corrupting the great body of temperance men and ruining the cause of temperance, is to be kept up. And, what is more, these cunning men, who study and understand the public mind, would not have dared to persevere in their impositions upon it, had they not been persuaded of its boundless credulity and deep degradation. How, for instance, could a gentleman, who spent his time last Fall in electioneering for a rum ticket, and in decrying the soundness on temperance of the temperance ticket, be bold enough to go from town to town in our county with his proposition for shutting up the dram-shop, unless he had first convinced himself, that the people are as ready to be duped as he is to dupe them ?

Whence comes it that these professedly religious men can behave so unreasonably and wickedly in an election ? It is largely owing to the fact that they are misled by their religion. Among them are good men, who are really better than their religion—their *adopted* religion—for no man is better than his real religion. But in the case of all of them religion has been taken on trust ; and is, therefore, an unreasoned and unreasonable thing, instead of being the precious product of their free and sovereign reason. Such persons are for the most part, enslaved to the Church instead of being “the Lord’s freemen ;” idolaters of the Bible rather than worshippers of God. Whither the

Church leads they almost universally follow. What its authorized expounders of the Bible say is the Bible, is sufficient to satisfy their conscience.

Every man's religion, to be worth any thing to him, must stand in his own judgment. By his own judgment must his life be regulated. The one standard by which he is to try his religion must be within and not without him. To that standard must he bring the Church—yes, and the Bible also. Gladly must he let them inform his judgment; but he must never let them over-ride it. Even the Bible was made for man, not man for the Bible. Even the Bible is the servant, and not the master, of human reason. I must receive nothing at the expense of my reason. To honor it, is at all times my highest religious duty. For reason is the voice of God within me, commanding what is right, and forbidding what is wrong. By my reason only can I know Him.

I do not forget the plausible objections to making reason the standard in religion. They are only plausible, however.

First: the reason of many a man, if not of most men, and indeed of all men, is incompetent to be the standard. Then is it necessarily incompetent to choose the standard. For how, if it can not decide for itself what is religious truth, can it be capable of choosing the church, or creed, or man, or book that shall decide it? May I make the Bible the standard? Certainly not until after my reason has passed approvingly upon the claims of the book, and that too in the light of the book itself, and not merely nor mainly in the light of what is said about it. But if after this process I make the Bible the standard, is it not all one with making reason the standard? I add that no man can be a Christian whose reason is inadequate to decide what is Christianity.

Second: Making reason the standard of religion would make as many religions as there are persons—reason having in every mind a more or less different play from what it has in every other mind. I admit that there would be a great diversity of religious views, though the religion of all holy hearts would be substantially the same. But what of this diversity? Is not such a result of the workings of free intelligence infinitely preferable to a conformity which is arrived at by holding reason in abeyance? Oh! how much longer must men, for the sake of avoiding this diversity in religious faith, continue to “go it blind”? But,

beside that this ecclesiastical policy results in the degradation of reason, and of the whole man, there is but little harmony secured in return for all this expense. For, brimful as is the religious world of efforts to establish a common standard outside of reason, and to enforce conformity, it is also brimful of diverse faiths and of relentless quarrels.

An error as great as common, is that we honor God by surrendering our judgment to the Church and the Bible. We deeply dishonor Him by it. Unswerving fidelity to our convictions is the highest service we are capable of rendering Him; for in our convictions is our highest possible present sense of God. The Bible or Church view of God may surpass our own immeasurably. But we can not claim the credit of it by simply adopting it; nor until it has become our own by being wrought into our convictions, and made a part of ourselves. We may *adopt* the religion of the Bible and the Church, and yet be atheists. For the adoption may simply prove our enslavement to authority, and that we are more willing to be the subjects of an unquestioning and blind faith, than to do and suffer what is needful in order to become intelligently and truly religious. For this very reason, that their religion is not their own—is adopted and superficial instead of inwrought—the mass of religionists are atheists.

But I shall be asked if I do not believe the Bible. I do. I believe it to be incomparably the best of books. Daily should it be studied and commented on in every school. Daily should its pages be pondered in the closet. Every morning and every evening should its precious lessons be repeated in the assembled family. The purest and sublimest morality is that of the Bible. Abundant proof is there in many of its pages that they who spoke or recorded the great words had drunk deeper of divine inspiration than any other men. It is because they had, that we always derive from this blessed book a deeper sense of holiness and a deeper sense of wickedness than from any other source. What words so fire our hatred of oppression as some which prophets spoke? When, too, do we so much appreciate goodness as while our hearts are melting over some of the lip and life-utterances of Jesus?

Nevertheless, there are portions of the Bible which are worth very little; and which, were they found elsewhere, no one

would deem worth much. Moreover, if we are shocked at the supposition that there are mistakes and untruths in it, it is only because of our false and superstitious education. We must pass upon the Bible just as freely as upon any other book: and nothing in it that is repugnant to our reason must be allowed to come into our faith. We are not to reject whatever in it is above our present comprehension. That would be most unreasonable. But, whatever is clearly counter to reason, we owe it to reason, to ourselves, and to God to reject. If, for instance, there is any passage in the Bible, (I do not say there is one,) in which God is represented as being partial—as being guilty, it may be, of the monstrous partiality of loving one unborn child and hating another—we must not, for the sake of saving the reputation and authority of the book, acquiesce in a representation that outrages all our just conceptions of God. To save these conceptions is infinitely more important than to save the book. If, too, we find that Paul (I do not say that we do) represents woman as inferior to man, or as having lower and less rights than man, we must not, to save Paul, sanction his wrong against woman. Justice must be accorded to her claims at whatever expense to his speculations.

I am not, in these remarks, denying aught of the value of the Bible. Incomputable is that value, if for no other reason than that it contains the life of Christ. But I may be asked how, since I am not confident that the Bible is all true, I can be confident that it gives the true life of Christ? My answer is, that such a life could not be fabricated. It must have been substantially what the Bible represents it to be. Such a reality transcends all the possibilities of fiction. It can not be the coinage of the imagination. It can not be a picture without an original. Besides, had it been within the compass of a good man's ability to invent such a life, his goodness would have prevented his palming it on the world as a reality. I scarcely need add that any approach to such a life lies wholly without the range of a bad man's conceptions, and can find no place among his possible inventions. And what if it were admitted that such a life could be written at this day by Charles Dickens or Mrs. Stowe, or other persons of their fertile genius, nevertheless it must not be forgotten that it would be written by the light of the actual life of Jesus, and would therefore be substantially but a copy.

Unspeakably happy fact is it that men are outgrowing the religions which have afflicted and debased them. An ignorant age very naturally submits to a religion of authority ; but an intelligent age, which demands and realizes progress in every other direction, will not be content to have the dead past continue to furnish the religion of the living present. Signs are rapidly multiplying that the time has come for every man to have his own religion : not to adopt it from his neighbor, his priest, his church ; but to construct it for himself. In the province of reason, when pervaded by Divine influences, and especially in the life of Jesus, who was the perfect impersonation of reason, because He was filled with those illuminating, holy, and sweet influences which can alone preserve the freest and fullest exercise of reason—there are abundant materials for such construction. Indeed, as in effect I have already said, what a man has to do to answer the calls of the true religion, is to keep all his appetites, passions, and interests in subjection to his reason. I admit that he can not do this without help—the help of that same spirit which dwelt in Jesus—and which, by the way, is as free to us as it was to him. In a word, all he has to do is to keep his reason in the ascendant. Then he will be like God. For to obey reason is to obey God. To obey it is to bring ourselves into harmony with Him, and to make ourselves partakers of His character. To disobey it is to prefer the character of rebels and atheists.

The religions, including even that called Christianity, but which is not Christianity, have proved themselves false by their failure to overcome the great crimes and abominations. War, slavery, drunkenness, and the various oppressions of woman still abound. Give however, reason its full play—true reason, I mean, and not the mixture of passion and prejudice, which they who have stifled the voice of reason, are wont to confound with it—and these crimes and abominations would fast disappear. That they are still making hell on earth is chiefly because religions of authority put in pleas for them, and justify or apologize for them in the name of their sacred books and churches. Exalt reason, however, to the place of religion, or rather religion to the place of reason, and these crimes and abominations will depart. But, they will remain, and be rife just as long as there is religious authority to keep them in

countenance; just as long as men suffer others to decide religious questions for them; to be the keepers of their conscience and the moulders of their minds. So long as rum-drinkers and slaveholders have a religion distinct from reason, they will run to it for permission to continue to drink rum and to be slaveholders; and they will not fail to get it. But once cut them off from their doctrinal or conventional religion, and throw them back upon their reason, and they will find it difficult to remain rum-drinkers and slaveholders. The South is full of the common religion, and hence the impossibility of peacefully dislodging her slavery. It is true that the religion of France was not essentially different from that of our own country. But so slender was its hold on the public mind, that it could not prevent the reason of France from abolishing Slavery. The abolition of French Slavery was largely owing to French infidelity. Had that nation been more religious and less rational, her slavery would have continued to this day.

It was the policy of Jesus to cut off the Jews from their spurious religion, and throw them back upon their convictions, and upon themselves. "And why," says he to them, "even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?" The like policy should be pursued by the modern reformer. It is as indispensable now as it was then to get reason into the place of the current religion.

Our likeness to God! The religion which has this God-honoring and man-ennobling aim is to be our religion. Never does a man's dignity appear so great as when seen in the light of his capacity for resembling his Maker. It is in this light that he is "the temple of God," and is never to be defiled by rum, tobacco, nor any sensuality. And who, viewing man in this light, can be guilty of degrading him in thought, word or deed? Who, having drunk in the spirit of this true religion, and, therefore, opened his eyes upon the grandeur of man, can put upon his brother's limbs the chains of slavery, or consent to see him sunk to the guilty uses to which war sinks its hirelings? Or who, having, under the influences of this true religion, felt how great is man, can look with patience on his bondage to a political or ecclesiastical party?

This religion, then, which recognizes man's capacity for resembling his God, and which inculcates the duties growing out

of that capacity—this is the only religion which can rid the world of the crimes that crowd it and the vices that have conquered it. This alone can shut up the dram-shop, and put an end to slavery and the other outrages upon the high nature of man.

But I must proceed to notice some of the charges against those who hold the views taken in this discourse.

We are accused of disparaging Christ because we refuse to be tested by certain mystic doctrines. Subscription to these doctrines is held to be essential to his honor. But they make most of Christ who, whatever their errors of doctrine, cherish his spirit and live his life. On the contrary, they make least of him who war upon his spirit and life—free however they may be, of these doctrinal errors.

The faith in Christ on which most rely is not that intelligent and cordial faith in his principles which good men alone can possess. But it is a faith of which wicked as well as good men can be the subjects—for it is superstitious, unintelligent and blind.

We hold that they most honor Christ who believe that the religion he taught is the religion of simple reason; and who also govern their lives by it. Let me add that I would have Christ honored in observing the rites and institutions as well as in espousing the comprehensive and essential principles of his religion. Let the principles be cordially adopted, and the rites and institutions carefully conformed to. For one, I would have the friends of Christ baptized with water, and in the manner in which he was. For one, I would have them partake of his appointed supper, and around a table, and with conversation as did he and his disciples. For one, I would have them observe a Sabbath, and choose for it the same day of the week which he and his disciples did. Even in things which are counted among the unessential, it is safer and happier to walk in his steps than to depart from them.

It is charged, too, that we are not Bible men. I admit that we are not any further than we live according to its great and everlasting principles. They are Bible men whose lives are in harmony with those principles; not they who trample upon them, at the same time that they make great merit of their pretended or imagined faith in the Bible.

Another complaint is, that we would abolish the ministry. But we would not. We would have the Gospel preached ten-fold more abundantly than now. To this end, however, no clerical order of men is needed. So simple is the true Gospel that he who loves it is well able to preach it, even though he may have no more than common-sense and a common education. Here and there arise men of rare power for preaching it. Let such be encouraged and enabled to itinerate as did Paul and Barnabas among the churches. At the same time let the members of every church feel that, however few or unlearned they may be, they are, under the divine blessing, able through the proper exercise of their gifts to edify each other.

I admit that a cultivated intellect adds immensely to the power of the preacher. But it need not be cultivated in the theological school. On the contrary, far more power to preach the common-sense, practical gospel of Jesus Christ is to be found in that general knowledge which the lawyer, or statesman, or enlightened merchant acquires in his intercourse with the world, than in the training of those institutions where religion is taught as a trade, and years of apprenticeship are spent to gain an understanding of its mysteries.

We are charged, too, with being Spiritualists. Some of us are and some of us are not Spiritualists. But what if we all were—still might we not all be Christians? To be a spiritualist—that is, to believe that spirits can communicate with us—is no proof that a man is or is not a Christian. His cordial reception, as evidenced in his life, of the great essential moral truths which come to him, whether in communications from spirits or from any other source, this and this alone proves that he is a Christian. If Spiritualism has been the occasion of harm to some, nevertheless there are others in whom it has wrought good. We have neighbors, whose religious life has been greatly improved by their interest in Spiritualism. I can not deny that Spiritualism is fraught with great evil to those who are foolish enough to welcome it as a new religion, and a substitute for Christianity.

A favorite, and certainly a very winning doctrine of the Spiritualists, is, that a wicked man attracts wicked spirits, and a good man good ones. How protective, purifying, and every way happy must be its influence on him who truly believes it!

How efficient the motive it furnishes to avoid a bad and pursue a good life!

I must not fail to add, in this connection, that the Spiritualists I met in my tours through the State, last fall, were nearly all reformers. They had broken off from both political and ecclesiastical parties, and were earnestly and openly devoting themselves to the abolition of sectarianism, slavery, intemperance, and other wrongs. I have no doubt that, in proportion to their numbers, Spiritualists cast tenfold as many votes for the Abolition and Temperance ticket as did others. Surely such a fact is highly commendatory of the influence of Spiritualism.

It is also said that we are opposed to revivals. We believe in revivals of true religion, and rejoice in them. But we confess that of revivals in general we are very suspicious. And why should we not be? It is true that they serve to fill up the churches; but do they increase the sum total of humanity and holiness and happiness? The revival of last year was preëminent for extent and commended character. But I am yet to be convinced that it has proved a public blessing. Survey the length and breadth of our State. Is not sectarian and party spirit, that power so mighty to shrivel and sink the soul, as rampant as ever? Was there ever a year in which the use of tobacco increased faster, or in which there was a more rapid multiplication of dram-shops? In no year among the last thirty, has so little interest been taken in the cause of temperance. Indeed, at the last election its professed friends seemed to delight in pouring contempt upon it. They were as eager to vote for rum men as they formerly had been to vote against them. And although there is still much talk (part sincere and part hypocritical, and nearly all nonsensical) against the extension of Slavery, yet has there never been a year since the dauntless young hero, William Lloyd Garrison, first summoned the nation to abolish it, in which has been evinced so little purpose to abolish it.

That there was a very unusual amount of religious tenderness and susceptibility the last year is not to be denied. Heaven be thanked for it; and may Heaven forgive the poor use men made of it! Oh! had the right stamp been present for making the right impression upon the molten metal! Had but the religion of Christ and reason—the religion which, in a

land of Slavery and dram-shops calls on its new-born disciples to make their first demonstration against those greatest enemies of God and man—had but that religion been offered to the tens of thousands of hearts that were then open to receive it—what an array of practical Christians would have been the fruit of the revival! But alas! instead of this priceless blessing, the revival was perverted to the propagation of that worthless doctrinal or conventional religion which keeps on good terms with Slavery, and flourishes among the dram-shops!

The city of New-York was the great centre of the revival. But when I was there, two or three weeks ago, I heard that the use of tobacco and strong drink was increasing rapidly; and several times I saw what I never see without sickness of soul, deep shame and sorrow and disgust, city cars labeled: "Colored people allowed in this car." What an insult to our equal brethren! What an insult to our common Father! What a blasphemous denial of His right to color as He will the varieties of the human family!

Now, these abominations exist in that city, because her revived, augmented, multiplied churches acquiesce in them. Every one knows, that were her pulpits and pews to speak, and vote as they should, all her cars would be opened as readily to people of one complexion as another. Every one knows that the dram-shops of New-York could not withstand the combined testimony of her churches. But her churches are not churches of Jesus Christ any further than they are actively against her dram-shops and her outrages upon the colored man.

Peterboro, as you remember, shared in last year's revival. But, is she the better for it? Has she less sectarianism? Much more. Has she proved herself more true to temperance and freedom? Much less. Have even her pastors, who were so active in the revival, shown their own profiting by it? Of only one of them can I speak. I well remember how earnestly at former elections he called on the people to vote the abolition and temperance ticket; but I am told that he was never known to open his lips for it at the last election. It was a sad change in my old friend and pastor. Was it the revival or something else that wrought it? True, he is of late much taken up with the doctrines of religion. But does he hold that he is, therefore, excused from its practice? True, he is of late very busy

in dealing damnation among those who dissent from his interpretation of these doctrines. But is the merit of this work so great as to atone for the neglect at the ballot-box of the bleeding slave and the bleeding cause of temperance? Oh! when will these doctrinal religionists learn that the promise of heaven is to him that "*worketh* righteousness?"—that "he that *doeth* righteousness is righteous," and that "whosoever *doeth not* righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother."

Finally, we are charged with being infidels. Now, although I would advise that this and all other false charges against us be borne with good temper, I am, nevertheless, of the opinion that we should quit the defensive, and pursue our assailants. When they charge us with being infidels because of our defective creeds, let us charge them with being infidels because of their wicked deeds. And this we are to do, not in the spirit of revenge, but for the purpose of putting them upon juster thoughts of themselves, and, as may perhaps follow, upon a needed condemnation of themselves. A very large majority of those who have the impudence to bring this charge against us prove themselves atheists by their treatment of their fellow-men. All persons are atheists who do not honor God by honoring his children. Hence, all are atheists who refuse to eat with their colored brethren, or to sit by their side in the carriage or the pew. And if there are Christians that vote for men who recognize the legality of Slavery, and wield the power of their office to perpetuate the bondage of the slave, none the less atheistic is such voting. And so, too, voting for those who recognize the sacred rights of property in intoxicating liquors, when offered for sale as a beverage, and who are in favor of keeping up the dram-shop, is none the less atheistic, because there are Christians who are guilty of it.

But I must bring my too long discourse to a close. This is an unsaved world. Superstitions have been employed to save it, and of course unsuccessfully. A misinterpreted and corrupted Christianity has been found inadequate. It will remain an unsaved world until trial shall be made of the true Christianity—of that religion of nature and reason which tests men not by their doctrines, but "by their fruits," and which makes it the one great work of every person to elevate himself and all within

his reach to the very highest resemblances of God that humanity is capable of attaining.

Shall we, my neighbors, have a part in bringing the world under the power of this only saving religion? Let us remember that we can not have it, unless we bring ourselves under its power. We can not be instrumental in spreading abroad this only true religion unless we have made it the treasure of our own hearts and the attraction and glory of our own lives.

DISCOURSE IN PETERBORO,

JUNE 19, 1859.

WHAT is the true religion? No other question propounded to mortals is so important. Answered, however, it easily can be, if only the true God is known. For, wherever He is known, there also is the true religion known. The religion of a people necessarily adjusts itself to their apprehensions of God. Know they the true God?—then is theirs the true religion. But spurious is it if they know him not. Hence the question to the solution of which we address ourselves is, What is the true God?

That in knowledge and power God is infinite may be assumed. But what is his moral character? Is He just, reasonable, benignant, loving, beneficent? Or, is He unjust, arbitrary, capricious, malignant, injurious? To compress the question into the fewest words, Is it in good or evil that He delights?

In order to obtain a surely right answer to this question, we must study not the opinions which are formed of God, but God himself. We must look not at what others tell us of His works, but at the works themselves. We must go not to men's records of Him, but to his own: not to books written by men, but to books written by God—to such books as the sun and stars and earth. For not only is it true that God can be "understood by the things that are made," but it is also true that by no other means can He be understood. Only in this vast creation which we call Nature, can we find the certain evidences of God's nature.

Man is a part of this vast creation: and in the light of himself and of other parts of it, and of his relation to them, he has abundant proof that God delights in good. The sun, which

lights and warms him, and the fruitful earth, which feeds and clothes him, are proofs of it. The returning seasons not only prove there is a God, but that He is a loving father. So full of His goodness are they that one of the poets calls them God. Though not a Pantheist, I nevertheless can forgive the Pantheistic personification into which this sweet poet is carried when he says of the seasons :

“These as they change, Almighty Father, these
Are but the *varied* God. The rolling year
Is full of Thee.”

I referred to the constitution of man for proof of the Divine goodness. How happy is he in obeying and how miserable in violating the laws of his own being! Should he not, then, allow himself to be convinced by these laws that his Maker is his friend and father?—the designer of good and not evil?—and that “Love” is among the fittest of all the names given to him?

And what is there throughout the realms of physical and moral government to raise so much as one doubt of the Divine attributes? In connecting peace with righteousness, and in ordaining the outflow of happiness from virtue, and misery from vice, has He not shown that love of the right and the pure, that benevolence and goodness are elements in His character? But death is in the world, is the reply; and such an evil and such a curse is it in the esteem of the theologians that they insist we need to go outside of nature and to other revelations for proof that God governs in justice and love. It is not true, however, that death is a curse; nor that it is so much as a calamity. That it is a penalty is purely a theological fiction. Were the laws of life and health properly observed, the common age of man reaching probably to a hundred years, would give ample time for making trial and reaping the enjoyments of this state of being. He would then feel death to be seasonable. Abundantly welcome would it be if he had observed the moral laws also—it being in his power to learn these as well as the physical, by studying the creation and providence of God. Abundantly welcome, I say—for then his holy, happy life would afford him the conscious preparation for a succeeding stage of existence. I add that death is necessary to make room for countless millions of human beings who otherwise could have no existence;

and that thus it is to be credited with swelling indefinitely the sum total of human happiness. Again, while a perpetual earthly existence would be the foregoing of another and probably higher life, it would also be characterized by far less enjoyment, dignity, and usefulness, than is a limited earthly existence. Human nature is slow to be improved after its habits are formed and fixed. The commonest illustration of this is that the physicians over forty years of age rejected the discovery of the true theory of the circulation of the blood. Had the earth, instead of being peopled with a succession of young, and, because young, free spirits, been the abode of men who never die, hoary errors would have successfully conspired against all progress, had there, indeed, been any to conspire against. Of all the inventions which cluster upon our day, probably not one would have been known in the whole range, from the lucifer-match which supplies the place of carrying fire in a skillet, to the telegraph which does in a minute what live-forever men could hardly have *begun* in a month. Indeed, death seems to be as indispensable a provision of nature for improving the condition and character of man, as it does to prepare the way for new and improved races of animals. Why is it unreasonable to believe that the races of men millions of years hence will surpass what they are now, quite as much as the most finely organized and the most beautiful specimens of animals in this age of the earth surpass the trilobites and other fauna of the Silurian period? Surely while we see death to be so great a blessing, we are not to argue from it that God is not good; but we are rather to exalt ourselves to such a comprehension of it, that we shall see it to be among the most needed provisions for man, and therefore among the highest evidences of the Divine goodness. Is it said that great changes in the earth rendered it an impossible abode for those races of animals which have disappeared? Let us not forget that probably as great changes are still going on, and that probably they are continually calling for and continually contributing to corresponding changes in man as well as in animals.

It is a sound rule in logic to begin with the known and proceed to the unknown; to begin with what is self-evident and proceed to what requires proof. As such was my beginning, so I am now at liberty to advance to a proposition which requires

a little defense. It is perhaps, however, only a little explanation that it requires. The proposition is that nature teaches there is a strong resemblance between God and man. They are "workers together." The grand Creator-worker and the little creature-worker are suited to each other. Man supplies what is lacking at the hand of God. He takes up nature from her Author, and develops her into new forms of embellishment, and results of higher usefulness. The work of each in the department of flowers shows that each has a taste for beauty and ornament. The work of each in the department of food for man and beast shows that each is provident and beneficent. The part that each has in feeding the hungry, and clothing the naked, proves that both are pitiful and benevolent. The mountain which the one and the pyramid which the other builds prove that both enjoy the sublime, and that both work for the ages.

We have said enough to justify our inferring of the moral nature of God from that of man. We deduce the former from our knowledge of the latter. We know that man's moral nature is good, and therefore that God's is. Man is loving and merciful, and appreciates truth and equity. Goodness is natural to him. In the narration of Paul's shipwrecked company of two hundred and seventy-six persons it is said: "And the barbarous people showed us no little kindness: for they kindled a fire, and received us *every one*, because of the present rain and because of the cold." It is true that this people might have murdered *every one*. But they would have done it under some misapprehension springing up in their barbarous ignorance, and contrary to that underlying humanity which called on them to save and comfort *every one* of their helpless guests.

The most barbarous people on earth, could they hear the story of the Good Samaritan, would honor him and condemn the Priest and Levite. Even such a people would applaud the golden rule, and would also acknowledge truth to be right and lying to be wrong. I do not forget that such crimes as burning the widow and casting the infant into the river are often cited to prove that human nature is blind, and bad, and base. These, however, are crimes not of, but against, human nature. They express its perversions, not itself. The religions of the world are mainly responsible for this class of crimes. It is these re-

ligions that have in all lands and ages outraged human nature, ignored it, and created monsters to take its place and wear its name. Most of the great crimes (Slavery included) which have disgraced and crushed mankind, have been committed either avowedly in the name of religion, or directly or indirectly under its promptings; and scarcely ever without the plea of its sanction.

Let, then, the theologians continue to insist on the badness, baseness, and blindness of human nature; we nevertheless will continue to repose faith in its moral perceptions and in its discernment and appreciation of truth, justice, and mercy. We nevertheless will continue to draw from his resemblances to man some of our strongest arguments for attributing a just, forgiving, and loving spirit to God.

Most persons will recoil from the inference of God's goodness from man's. Their eye is on the masses of men. But the masses are only the ruins of men—though even in these ruins, noble and beautiful characteristics of human nature can still be discovered. Human nature can not be so successfully judged of in the light of those who trample upon as of those who obey its laws. We should judge of it by good men. Nay, we should come at once to Jesus, and judge of it by him: for he is its best specimen, since he was perfectly obedient to all the laws of his being. When we say that the Divine nature is like human nature, we do indeed mean that God resembles even the common and unfavorable specimens of man, though of course much less than He does the best. But when Jesus, the model man, is in our eye, then do we say with an emphasis that God is like man.

Another argument to sustain the conclusion that God is like man is, that it can not, without the greatest violence to all probability, be supposed that He would create His intelligent beings with a moral nature contrary to His own. Were His nature malignant so would be theirs. But we see them to be on the side of justice and goodness, and so therefore is He.

Now, if human nature, wherever its voice can be heard beneath the immeasurable wrongs and outrages which are every where heaped upon it, and are every where at work to suppress that voice, does still, in spite of those wrongs and outrages, witness for truth and justice and love and mercy, then surely these qualities must all be found in the Author of human na-

ture. Moreover, they must be perfect in Him, in order to correspond with the perfect wisdom, skill, and contrivance manifested in His works. The attributes of Deity, if bad, must be entirely bad; if good, entirely good.

When, then, we are told that God could not forgive sin until His angry spirit had been appeased and His laws satisfied by the sufferings of an innocent person, we reply that this view of Him and of His spirit and laws is forbidden, not only by what we learn of Him and them directly from His outward and visible creations, but also from those clearly warrantable inferences of His moral nature which we draw from that of man. His character, as viewed from these indubitable sources, assures us that He is ever ready to forgive every repentant offender. Jesus was assured of it, else he would not have taught it in the parable of the prodigal son. But Jesus goes much further. His words on the cross imply a belief that his Father is ready to forgive the impenitent also, provided that ignorance be coupled with their impenitence. But even men are good enough to do all this. Much more then is God. "If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts, how much more your Father?"

But it is said that nature and the history of man abound in analogies to the Atonement. I can not admit that any such analogies are to be found in either. It is true that oftentimes the guiltless suffer for the guilty—now of necessity, and now of choice. But in no case is there a transference of character from one to the other. The guilty party remains no less guilty, and the guiltless party contracts no guilt literal or constructive. Remember, too, that the human sense of justice revolts at visiting upon the good man the penalty due to the bad man—a strong argument, by the way, that the Divine sense does also.

When, too, we are told that God has prepared an eternal hell—a place of endless and inconceivably exquisite tortures—for a large share of his children, we are sure that this shocking picture finds no counterpart and no warrant in creation and Providence. These tell us of a father and not of a fiend; of love, and not of hatred; of forgiveness, and not of revenge. These tell us that in all ages God has made "his sun to rise on the evil and on the good," and has sent his "rain on the just and on the unjust;" and these bid us hope that in other worlds, as

well as in this, He will still be the father and the friend of men. Again, if men are miserable here, it is not of His infliction, but because they make themselves so; yes, and make themselves so in the midst of the numberless and sufficient means He has provided for making themselves happy. If, in this world, men persevere in ruining themselves, it is in the face of His perseverance to save them. And why should it be otherwise in other worlds? From nothing we see of God is He changeable. We are bound to believe that He is as ready to afford His children opportunities in one stage of being as well as in another, for the improvement of their character; and that He is ever intent, as much so in one world as in another, to do them good and not evil. And why should we doubt that God is as forgiving in another life as in this? Would Jesus have told us to set no limits to the times of forgiving our brother, had he believed that the exercise of God's forgiving spirit is confined to this first brief stage of human existence? Would he have told us to be so much better than he believed God to be?

Eternal hell! Then must sin be an eternally-disturbing force in the universe. For manifestly when sin shall have ceased, punishment will also.

Eternal hell! Yes, and it is to be suffered by men of the loveliest character, provided they were not able to subscribe in this life to certain ecclesiastical interpretations of a book.

Putting people into an eternal hell! Why, the worst of men would not thus serve their worst enemies. How much less would God! Orthodoxy makes God infinitely more malignant and cruel than are the most malignant and cruel men.

Eternal hell! No man does and no man can believe it. It is untrue if only because human nature is incapable of believing it. Moreover, were such a belief possible it would be fatal. Let the American people wake up with it to-morrow, and none of them would go to their fields, and none to their shops, and none would care for their homes. All interest in the things of earth would be dead. The whole nation would be struck with paralysis, and frozen with horror. Even the beginnings of such a belief are too much for the safety of the brain; and every step in that direction is a step toward the madhouse. The orthodox preacher of an eternal hell would himself go crazy did he believe his own preaching. Did he see his wife, or children, or

friends, or neighbors, in danger of falling into it, he would be overpowered by the sight. He saves his sanity only through his insincerity. To be sincere in his preaching he must first be insane.

The little influence of their religion on its professors is often wondered at. But why should it be? They do not believe their religion, and they can not, so long as an eternal hell is a part of it. Since their belief of this part is at the most but a dreamy and fancied one, there can hardly be a real, earnest and deeply-influential belief of any part. Their conscious or unconscious distrust of the truth of this part necessarily begets a similar distrust of the truth of every part. The enormous draught at this point upon their staggering faith can not fail to cast in their view an air of unreality over the whole of their religion. Herein is the explanation of the fact that, while an ignorant church is little better than a mass of superstition, a more enlightened one is little better than a mass of infidelity and hypocrisy. The members of the latter, required to believe in more than their credulity can swallow, do truly and deeply believe in nothing; and thus are they infidels. Moreover, they are very great hypocrites, since they stoutly profess to believe it all. Doubtless, one of their motives for this boundless profession of faith is to supply their conscious lack of it. They are something like Mrs. Stowe's Candace, who, to atone for her past lack of faith in the celebrated Bible apple, was now ready to eat apple, tree, and all.

We are wont to lament the prevailing want of religious earnestness. But should we not rather rejoice in it, seeing how monstrous are the religions? With what a good stomach we should hate, and crush, and kill one another, if we really believed that we are such devils as our religions picture us to be! Once persuade me that God is waiting to roast my neighbor, and the way is made easier for persuading me that I shall do God service by hurrying that neighbor with a dagger or bullet into the prepared fire.

But it is held that these things, which are so at war with Nature and Providence, are affirmed by the Bible. I do not admit that they are. Certainly they are not by the Bible as a whole. But even if they were, that would not prove them to be true. It would only prove that, so far, the Bible is false. Whether

these things are true or false, is a question to be referred not to the umpirage of a book, but to the infinitely higher one of Nature and Providence.

But is not the Bible the word of God? It is no further such than it corresponds with the manifestations of God. It is to be judged by Nature and Providence. Formerly, men in their folly made the Bible paramount to Nature and Providence, as even now does the splendid Baptist writer of New-York who calls geology and astronomy "inferior truth." They went to it to study the motions of the heavenly bodies. But wise mén went to astronomy. Even in our own day there are persons who go to the Bible for an understanding of earthly creations; and even dear Hugh Miller himself thought it very important to save it from the reproach of ignorance in this respect. Wise men, however, go to geology, caring nothing at all of the havoc it may make of the traditions and allegories of Genesis. Folly, sheer folly, seeks to mould the mountains, and deposit the rocks and account for the waters in harmony with those traditions and allegories. But wisdom lets the mountains, rocks and waters, speak for themselves, let what will gainsay them. So, too, it is held that the Bible, and the Bible alone, explains the moral government of the world. Most religionists, very foolishly turning their backs upon the sure light that Creation and Providence shed upon this subject, as foolishly acknowledge the words of a book to be conclusive upon it. Alas! that men should fancy that they do in this wise honor the revealed God! They deeply dishonor Him. For the revelations of a book, to which they confine themselves, are as small as they are uncertain, compared with "the abundance of the revelations" in nature.

But is not the Bible inspired? The spirit of much of it comes, I admit, from the heavenly fount. Very common earthly sources, however, would be adequate to supply most of the remainder. No other pages are so full of the Divine presence and power as are a part of its pages. But there are pages of the Bible which might have been written by entire strangers to that presence and power.

Is not, however, the Bible infallible? No person but God is infallible; and no thing but nature. Nature is the infallible witness for the infallible God. Precious source of enlighten-

ment is the Bible. But in the light of nature only, (I need not add providence, since that is a part of or essentially connected with nature,) can the true religion be surely learned. The Bible is the work of man, and hence even its best pages must bear the marks of human imperfection. But the volume of nature is written by the finger of God, and is, therefore, as free from error as Himself. What, however, is the Bible, or rather a Bible, that we are bound to adopt the whole of it unquestioningly, and to worship it, and to insist that there is not in the whole of it one unsound doctrine, nor one false sentiment? I wish all the clergy would tell their hearers that it is simply a selection from ancient writings—a selection, too, made by persons who no one claims were inspired. Such outspoken honesty would serve to overthrow a great deal of superstition, and to dispel a great deal of delusion. Millions, on hearing this news, would look upon the Bible with new eyes. Then, for the first time, they would have courage to exercise (but oh! with what trembling!) their reason upon it, and to judge of its merits for themselves. Then, for the first time, the soul-darkening, soul-shriveling, and soul-enslaving religion of authority, would begin to give place in them to the soul-enlightening, soul-expanding, and soul-freeing religion of reason.

The clergy should also frankly tell their hearers that they who undertook to make up a Bible differed widely among themselves in respect to what should go to make it up. They should tell them how some voted to receive and others to reject this, that, and the other of these ancient writings. Nor should they forget to add, that the Catholics hold that the Protestant Bible does not take in near as many of those ancient writings as it should; and that the Protestants hold that the Catholic Bible takes in far more than it should.

Perhaps both the Catholic and Protestant Bibles take in too many of these writings: perhaps too few. Were I to make up a Bible for myself, it might differ much from both. It might be inferior, possibly it might be superior to both. But, however this may be, my assumption of the right to force it upon the conscience of others would be no more arrogant and nonsensical than is the like assumption in behalf of the existing Bibles. Every man is in an important sense bound to make up a Bible for himself. But while this is required by the religion

of reason, the religion of authority claims that its patent right from heaven to make Bibles excludes every other right to make them.

I refused to admit that the Bible, especially as a whole, justifies the popular or orthodox view, either of the Atonement or of future punishment. An eternal hell finds no countenance in the Old Testament, and is opposed to the general tenor of the New. There are a few words in the latter which favor the institution. I say institution—for if Slavery may be dignified with this name, it is peculiarly proper that every other hell should be. Such of these few words as are attributed to Jesus (and most of them are) would be entitled to our most profound and earnest consideration, could we be sure that he uttered them. But even if we could be, we should be more or less uncertain to what they refer. Moreover, as they are used in connection with his highly figurative and surpassingly hyperbolic language, we should be apprehensive that to put a literal interpretation upon them might be to sacrifice their significance. Manifestly, then, these few words constitute a basis quite too narrow and uncertain on which to build an argument for an eternal hell—an argument leading to the most important and appalling of all conclusions.

In every age, thousands of the learned spend no little time in concentrating the whole power of their minds, and the whole interest of their hearts, upon inquiries into the meaning of an adjective which Jesus is reported to have coupled with the word "punishment." Upon that meaning they make turn the future and eternal condition of man. What matchless folly to go to an adjective, instead of God, with a question of such overwhelming importance! Nay, what insanity to be thus driving an exclusive search into a word, for the purpose of learning the very little of the Divine will which can be learned from a mere word, while all the while the heavens above our heads, and the earth beneath our feet, are teeming with unmistakable and conclusive evidences of that will! Oh! when will men "turn from these vanities unto the living God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all things that are therein; and left not himself without witness in that He did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness!"

To return for a moment to this unduly-magnified adjective. Is it properly translated into "everlasting?" That is uncertain. Uncertain, too, is it whether it was spoken in Hebrew, Syriac, or Greek. For scholars can no more decide in what language it was spoken than in what language the Book of Matthew was first written. Now, if the idea which Jesus conveyed in this word, and in its original connections, has indeed gone the round of all these languages, then it would not be strange if, by the time it reached our language, it had become a greatly changed idea.

Nor can it be properly said that the popular or orthodox view of the Atonement is sustained by the Bible. The few passages for it are inconsistent with the general tenor of the book.

The Jews were waiting for the Messiah. He came. The mass did not own him; and the few who did were sadly disappointed and utterly confounded by his death. They "thought it had been he who should have restored Israel." But in process of time happy turns were given to his death, whereby the believing Jews were lifted up out of the despair into which that death had sunk them. One of these turns, as honest, I admit, as it was natural, was the Atonement. The sacrifice of animals for the remission of sins was deeply rooted in the Jewish faith. A very easy step, therefore, was it to a fanciful analogy between such sacrifice and the death of Christ, and still easier was the succeeding step which transmuted the fiction into an indubitable fact. The early Gentile converts were probably but little interested in the Atonement. Not being prepared for it by a Jewish education, they would be slow to receive it. To them Paul says very little of it. The sacrifices of the Greeks and Romans differed widely from those of the Jews.

I admit that the Atonement is, in the esteem of the majority of Christians, the great central doctrine of Christianity—the great saving doctrine, inasmuch as they hold that every man denying it must perish, and that Christianity itself would perish without it. But if the faith of the earliest Christians is appealed to for determining its relative importance, then will but little account be made of the doctrine. Jesus did not teach it, nor was it taught until many years after his death. It would not be held to at this day, had not Paul taught it. Paul would not

have taught it, had he not been a Jew. The Jews would not have received it but for their faith in animal sacrifices; and from this faith they would have been free, had they entirely outgrown paganism. It was because of their pagan conceptions of Deity that they numbered damnation and destruction among His intensest delights. It was because of the lingerings of paganism in them, that they attributed to Him a burning wrath which blood and suffering could alone appease.

No, the Atonement was not the præminent doctrine with the early Christians. The Resurrection held that place. This was the "hope" for which Paul was judged—the "hope that there shall be a resurrection of the dead." He taught that their preaching and faith were vain if there be no resurrection.

I have mentioned one of the happy turns given to the death of Christ. Another and no less honest one was that which made his death lead to a triumphant argument for the resurrection. If Christ had risen, then there would be a rising of all, "both of the just and the unjust." His resurrection was held to be the earnest—the "first fruits" of the general resurrection.

With the believing Jews, the Messiah's reign—a visible and literal reign—was second in importance to the resurrection only. They were sure of it. So, too, was Jesus. The difference between himself and them on this point was, that they believed he would set up his kingdom then, and he that he must first pass through the gates of death. Soon after his death, however, they believed that he had risen, and the effect of this belief was to renew their confidence in his kingdom. Confident were they that he would soon return to "reign in righteousness." Full of this confidence was Paul. He doubted not that "the end of the world has come;" though he did not think it to be quite as near as the Thessalonians did. Peter doubted not that "the end of all things is at hand." So, too, James, "that the coming of the Lord draweth nigh." And John adds: "We know it is the last time." But Christ did himself assign a very early date to his return. Matt. 16 : 28 ; 24 : 34 ; Mark 9 : 1 ; Luke 21 : 32.

It surely should not be allowed to deduct any thing from our estimate of the value of Christ, nor from our love of him and interest in him, that in this and that instance the Father has

disclosed the "day and hour not to the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son." I know how common is the remark that Christ can not be loved by those, and can be of no avail to those, who do not see him to be at all points one with his Father. But the remark is as foolish as it is common. That he is one with his Father in spirit and character makes him all we need of him; and it should produce in us no sorrowful disappointment and no sense of loss to know that in the end "shall the Son also himself be subject unto Him, that God may be all in all." Alas! that men should waste their time and zeal upon these speculative and profitless questions about Christ. To every one thus unwisely employed does he say as he did to the impertinent Peter: "What is that to thee? follow thou me." Suppose Christ did misapprehend some or even many of the things in the future. No less bound are we to follow him, and grow in likeness to him. No less is he God's own spirit "manifest in the flesh." No less is he our teacher, pattern, Saviour.

Yes, Jesus believed not only that the Jewish nation would within a few years be overwhelmed and scattered, but that "then" would his kingdom be set up, and "with power and great glory. The temple, Jerusalem, and Judea, did all meet their fate before the generation to which Jesus spoke had passed away. But his kingdom has not yet been set up, nor have the signs appeared which were to precede it.

By the way, is not the scene described in Matt. 25 : 31 to 46, substantially identical with that described in Matt. 24 and Luke 21, and therefore was it not to be enacted within a few years from the day in which Christ pictured it before his hearers? In other words, is that scene, instead of being, as is held, the final judgment of all the living and dead, any thing more than a merely Jewish scene? In Matt. 24 and Luke 21, we have the foretelling of the ruin of the Jewish nation and the setting up of the Messiah's kingdom. In Matt. 25, are we not informed of the reward of those Jews who welcomed the ministry of Christ, and of the punishment of those Jews who rejected it—especially of the reward of those who, during his expected brief disappearance from earth, should honor his disciples—even "the least" of them—and the punishment of those who, during that brief period, should neglect those disciples—even "the least" of them? It is true that the word is

translated "nations," but it is also true that "nations" is not among its primary meanings, and that "multitudes," "companies," "tribes" are. In the light of Matt. 19 : 28, do we not see some evidence that "tribes" would be a proper translation, and that the judgment in view was not to be of "all nations," but only of all the Jewish tribes?

I readily admit that this passage in Matt. 25 would not, if standing alone, easily bear this unusual interpretation. But must it not be looked at in connection with Matt. 16, and Mark 9, and Luke 21, etc., and interpreted in the light of these Scriptures as well as in the light of its own language? Moreover, we must remember both how exceedingly figurative is the language in Matt. 25, and how improbable it is that it is reported with entire correctness. I confess that owing to the fact that a simultaneous judgment of all the living and all the dead is a puzzle to common-sense, I am liable to give force to what are but feeble and, indeed, but seeming objections to the common interpretation of the scene in Matt. 25.

But however this sublime scene should be interpreted, our duty to identify ourselves with the cause of Christ, and to walk in his steps, remains the same. Admit we must that every explanation of it is beset with difficulties. Nevertheless, we repeat that Jesus remains the same model of moral character by which every one is bound to fashion his own, and the same personification of love and holiness which every one should aspire to become.

Far from inexplicable is it that so many stickle for the divinity and atonement of Christ and other metaphysical doctrines coupled with His name, while so few are found who are intent on breathing His spirit and copying His life. Self-complacent logic suffices for the former; but to accomplish the latter there must be the self-denying and cross-bearing cultivation of character. The bare profession of Christ meets the whole demand in the one case. But character—even the character of Christ—is called for at every step in the other. In the light of this distinction, we see how it is that, while Christians are so very scarce, sectarians are so very plenty. Difficult it is to follow Christ; but easy to be swayed by a party zeal for this or that denomination. Difficult it is to perform duties; but easy to prate about doctrines.

I am reminded in this connection of the denial of Christian character to all who disbelieve or doubt any of the miracles in the history of Christ. But the denial is as unjust as it is common, since it turns not at all upon, and does not at all involve, our moral character whether we do or do not give credit to miracles. Men may be either good or bad, and give such credit; either good or bad, and withhold it. A scholar in this day, however devout, would be very like to withhold it; for, aware as he is that all nations abound in traditions of miracles, and agreeing with the intelligent that all others are false, he quite naturally calls in question the truth of the Christian miracles also. He doubts even the miraculous conception of Jesus. For in his extensive reading he has found the instances very common all along down the track of the world's history, in which a supernatural origin is attributed to its heroes and philosophers. It would not be strange if, remembering that Plato was believed to be the offspring of a god and a virgin, and if, remembering, too, that it was also believed that the man who subsequently became her husband was told, in a dream, by the god not to marry her until her divine child was born—I say, it would not be strange if he should suspect that the account of the origin of Jesus is but a substantial repetition of this fable about Plato. The scholar might be all wrong in this suspicion. Nevertheless, he would not necessarily be a sinner for it.

To be frank, I suppose that all enlightened and broad-minded men do at least doubt the truth of miracles. They have never seen any, and hence they are slow to yield to even abounding testimony in their behalf. Had they ever seen so much as one miracle, they could easily be brought to believe in others, on the same principle that, having seen one city, men can be persuaded of the existence of others. Moreover, it is especially difficult for him to believe in the Christian miracles who reflects that Christianity has done more than all things else to dispel belief in miracles. He would naturally expect that a religion of such an effect would keep itself clear of miracles. By the way, this effect of Christianity is among the arguments for regarding it as a natural rather than a supernatural religion.

I was speaking of Christ's misapprehensions of the future, when I was drawn off upon an incidental subject. May I not add to what I said of these misapprehensions, that He became,

on His ascension, immeasurably more than perhaps He himself expected to be? He lived and died the Messiah of the Jews; and not only did He believe, in common with His disciples, that He would return to earth, but it is somewhat probable that He also believed that He would return to earth in no wider capacity than that in which He left it. Unbounded and everlasting thanks to God, His Messiahship and nationality fell off at the grave, and He arose the Saviour of Mankind! His life, and death, and words, and spirit, are not the monopoly of one nation, but the common property of all. They are not for the salvation and glory of the Jew only, but of all, whether Jew or Gentile, who are willing to be saved and glorified by them.

It is time, however, we had returned from this long digression, in which, while we have vindicated the Bible, we have, nevertheless, admitted that nature is the only authoritative instructor in our study of the character of God. Before making this digression, we had said enough to prove what, in the light of this instructor, is that character. We saw God to be just and good; and hence it is entirely plain to reason that justice and goodness are the spirit of the true religion. For, as was said in the beginning of our discourse, the true religion must be like the true God. Another thing no less plain to reason is, that if the religion in our hearts is the true one, it will be found to recognize and honor and harmonize with the several kinds of intelligent beings with which it has to do. While toward God and men and angels (provided it has to do with angels also) it is always the same spirit of justice and goodness, it nevertheless adapts itself to the different demands of the three different natures.

The Psalmist says: "My goodness extendeth not to Thee." There is a sense in which this is emphatically true. Nevertheless the love, gratitude, adoration, prayer due to God are expressions of the goodness as well as of the justice which enter into the spirit of the true religion. In other words, there are services of religion which are Godward—being called out by his nature, and adapted to it.

Excuse me for making another digression. Just here I must defend prayer—the duty of the exercise being strongly doubted in some quarters, and even totally denied in others. It is apprehended by some, and fully believed by others, that prayer overlooks and interferes with the general laws of the universe.

Men must have become persuaded of the truth of the doctrine of Divine influence before they will become men of prayer. The influence of a great and good man pervades his town, his county, and, may be, his whole State. Why, then, may not God's influence pervade His universe? But skepticism knows the means by which man's influence is diffused, and not those by which God's is. And shall it, therefore, deny that those exist, and deny, too, that the influence itself exists?

The doctrine of Divine influence admitted, and there are prayers which all will see to be reasonable; such as are in effect prayers for the opening of the mind to that influence. Do I pray for an increase of my physical or spiritual health? If I pray intelligently, it is not that God may increase it, but that He may influence me to increase it by my improvement of the means to that end placed by His providence within my reach. In other words, it is asking Him to dispose me to answer my own prayers; and surely this is not ignoring any general laws with which we are acquainted; nor is it asking Him to come into conflict with them.

Widely different, I admit, would be the case were I praying for sunshine or rain. That would be praying that a work may be done not by myself but by God—and a work involving, it might be, an arrest of some of His general laws. Nevertheless, I do not say that there are no possible circumstances in which a people are to feel at liberty to pray for what involves such arrest. When threatened with famine by drouth or rain, or with some other great calamity, they, perhaps, ought so to pray, and not to confine themselves to prayer for resignation. For we do not know but, in so praying, they would keep themselves in harmony with a law as old and fixed and eternal as the general laws referred to. A law there may be which shall provide that even these general laws shall give way in certain circumstances—as for instance, before the prayers of a suffering people, who shall have greatly honored themselves and their God, by attaining a certain posture of soul. A law is not impossible, which, the conditions precedent being supplied, shall compel even the sun and moon to stand still, in answer to prayer. I confess that it is not for man to limit the Divine possibilities, nor to essay to number and comprehend all the laws of the universe.

Are my suppositions at war with the unchangeableness of the general laws? They are not. The provision from eternity, that a possible or given conjuncture shall serve to arrest one of these laws, is from eternity a part of that law: and the actual conjuncture does not change the law.

We can not guard too carefully against all undue limitation of the efficiency of prayer, and all undue diminution of the motives to engage in it. Let us, who believe that the religion of reason calls for the religion of nature, remember that the flow of prayer is as natural as the flow of water. The prayerless man has become an unnatural man. Jesus "continued all night in prayer to God:" and he was the wisest and best of men, because the most natural of men—because the truest to his nature.

I will say nothing here of "special providences," except that if they do occur they must be the result of the unchangeable and eternal laws of the unchangeable and eternal God.

A few words more in regard to these general laws. There is a view of them which multiplies infidels with a fearful rapidity. It is that view which puts them in the place of a personal God, by representing Him as having set them in motion, and then turning his back upon them. But these laws are not God. They are only the modes by which He works, and they have no power only as He constantly energizes them, and no existence only as He constantly breathes his own into them.

To return again to the line of argument in this discourse—I was speaking of the true religion as a spirit of justice and goodness, and also of its proper service toward God. I now pass on to speak of its proper and more important service toward man. More important I say, since its truest service toward man is also its truest service toward God. More important, too, since only a small part of our time should be consumed with direct duties to God, and nearly all of it with direct duties to man. Paul says that "*all the law is fulfilled*" in our duties to man.

Alas! how wanting in the characteristics of the true religion have the prevailing religions of the world always proved themselves to be by their unhappy bearing on human nature! Conclusive witnesses of this are those deep wrongs done to man ever and every where; that contemptuous disregard of his rights; that heartless indifference to the essential wants and urgent demands of his high and sacred nature. What overwhelming tes-

timony against these religions have we in Polygamy, Land-monopoly, War, Slavery, and the annihilation of the rights of Woman!

These crimes prevail because conventional and false religions prevail: and never shall we find relief from them and a remedy for the ruin they have wrought, until we shall find it in a religion harmonizing with human nature, and growing out of it—a religion, in short, which shall allow human nature to be a law unto itself and to be its own religion. That eminently profound observer, Madame de Staël, justly accords to the Christian philosophy the high honor of seeking to harmonize religion with human nature, (*celle qui cherche l'analogie de la religion avec la nature humain.*) I add that we can never learn what is the true religion except by studying the rights and wants of human nature.

Hitherto religions altogether alien and revolting to human nature have been forced upon it—religions whose slanderous song is:

“Nature must count her gold but dross,
If she would gain the heavenly land;”

religions that have impudently and lyingly asserted their superiority to human nature, and that have thereby succeeded in bringing it under their tyrannical and crushing sway; religions that under the plea of saving human nature, have gone about to kill it. Is this idea of having our nature be our law and our religion, startling and offensive to you? Goodness, I am aware, is well-nigh universally regarded as an external injunction upon, rather than a law of, our nature. But to be truly good and truly religious, is not to be in bondage to a foreign authority. It is, on the contrary, to enjoy the freedom of living out our own good nature and being ourselves. He who made us bids us be what He made us—bids us live out ourselves.

I know that this doctrine of the goodness of human nature must shock some of my hearers—for they, and, indeed, nearly all of us, were trained up to believe in its total depravity. Would that men universally had faith in its goodness! Such faith would serve mightily to lift up their lives to the high level of their nature. On the other hand, their degrading submission to the doctrine of their total depravity goes very far toward accounting for their false morality, base spirit, and dwarfed manhood. So long as they believe in this doctrine, they will be an

easy prey to the priesthood. For so long they will feel themselves to be incapable of distinguishing right from wrong, and compelled to go outside of themselves to supply the deficiency. This deficiency the priesthood stands ever ready to supply, either by means of its interpretation of books, or simply its own dicta. Hence men receive this as right, and reject that as wrong, not because they see them to be so, but because of their being told that they are so. Hence it is explained that many worthy people admit that even Slavery is right. Instantly would they condemn it were their moral sense allowed to pass upon it. But their moral sense, the theologians tell them, is so blunted and blinded by their total depravity as to make it necessary to supersede it by a revelation—by a book. It is by thus denying to men the ability, and therefore the right, to judge for themselves, even in the plainest of moral matters; it is by thus overriding them with authority, and reducing them to puppets, that they are so largely characterized by a sense of irresponsibility, by ignorance, weakness, superstition, cowardice. It is, in a word, by this means, that they are brought to live a life which is sunk so far below their nature.

A natural religion is, as we have already substantially said, the only one for which reason calls. Men study books to learn religion. But while we readily admit that some books, and especially the precious Bible, (that most eloquent defender, next to Nature, of both Divine and human rights, as we joyfully see it to be when wielded by such a mighty man of God as Cheever,) are useful to this end, we must nevertheless insist that the study of nature is immeasurably more so. So far as the Vedas or Koran may be a record of the teachings of nature, or may be in harmony with those teachings, they are valuable: and only by the same rule is the value of the Bible to be judged. It is by means of books and their own imaginations that men conjure up these crazy religions that make such frightful and ruinous war on human nature—dwarfing and shriveling it with the terrors of their horrid hells, and debasing and fooling it with their superstitious and puerile pictures of heaven. But only let reason be obeyed, and a natural religion be allowed to take the place of these artificial, fanciful, and insane religions, and the abuses of human nature will cease, and the deep wounds they have made upon it will be quickly healed,

its fair proportions be all recovered, and its union with the Divine nature be reëstablished.

I spoke of the mistake of studying religion in books rather than in nature. I remark, incidentally, that in this mistake is to be found the fruitful source of sectarianism. Were the nature-religion substituted for the book-religion, there could be no sect. Nearly all cultivated men read nature substantially alike, and so would all men but for the authority which they allow to certain books. Take away from the thousand Christian sects their temptation to quarrel about a few words in the Bible, and their occupation would be gone, and their death would be certain. But this temptation will all disappear the moment they shall see that nature, and not a book, is authority in religion.

It is our duty to be reformers. But reformers we shall not be unless we make ourselves aware and keep ourselves aware of the spuriousness of the popular religion. Frequent are the occasions which reveal that spuriousness: and it may be profitable for us all if we bring into review at this time some of these revelations.

The Governments of Massachusetts and New-York were recently called on to provide protection for fugitive slaves. But they refused. Why did they? Government in its true sense is simply the collective people, charged with the duty of protecting each one of the people. The plea for their refusal was, that Massachusetts and New-York are under a promise not to protect this class of persons. Admit that they are, (though every endeavor to show that they are must be in contempt and defiance of the canon of legal interpretation,) nevertheless, ought not the protection to have been afforded first, and the promise to have been considered afterward? The duty of the protection could not be conditional on any thing. At all times, and in all circumstances, such a duty is imperative and absolute. Ought not Herod to have saved John first, and to have left to after consideration his promise involving the contrary? Moreover, could it have been the true religion which would have led him, in such after consideration, to regret the breaking of a promise that called for murder? Certainly not. No more could it have been the true religion which would have brought the Legislatures in question to repent themselves of having broken a promise which called for a greater crime than murder.

I say a greater—for to be guilty, directly or indirectly, of plunging a brother into the pit of Slavery is worse than to have a part in murdering him. We had all rather have our children murdered than enslaved. The Legislature or Court that dares insult human nature by entertaining the question whether man is merchandise is no better than a mob, and has no more rights than a mob. Nay, it is a mob; and a right-minded people would sustain their Executive in forcibly dispersing it. Were the people of Ohio inspired by the true religion, instead of being debased by a false one, they would command their Governor to put an immediate stop to this trying of men in her Courts for not obeying a law for Slavery. There can be no law for what is itself not law; and to know Slavery as law is an offense against human nature, unsurpassed, as well for its absurdity, as for its criminality.

Let me not be understood as holding that every unwise promise should be broken. If I have promised two dollars for a service which proves to be worth but one, I had, nevertheless, better pay the two dollars. If the people have in the Constitution promised to do foolish things, let them be done, provided the doing of them is insisted on. But whatever may be said in regard to things merely foolish, there can be no obligation to do what is clearly wicked. Law is for righteousness. For wickedness there can be no law.

In this great wickedness of the Legislatures of Massachusetts and New-York, the people of these States acquiesce. Doubtless they stand ready to reelect those members who voted against the slaves, under the plea of their virtual promise to vote against them. Doubtless they do themselves feel the force of this plea. So far as they do, they prove that the religion of the people, as well as of the Legislatures of these States, is no better than that of the infamous Herod. Thus abominable is a conventional and book-religion. But in what beautiful contrast to it stands the religion of nature!—that reasonable religion which treats all beings according to their natures—the man according to his, and the horse according to his; not the man as if he were a horse, any more than the horse as if he were a man. Our slaveholding religion subjects a man to the discipline of a horse, and thus rivals the absurdity of the memorable attempt in Rome to exalt a horse to the dignity of a

man. The religion of nature does not treat one man as a hog, and another as superhuman, but, recognizing the common nature of all men, be they white, red, or black, it brings them all under a common treatment. Hence, the religion of nature can have no fellowship with slaveholding, nor with Massachusetts, New-York, nor any other State which gives the least countenance to slaveholding. For slaveholding lifts up the slaveholder above all the rights of human nature, and reduces the slave to a brute. Nor can it have fellowship with the selling of intoxicating drinks, since that fills the coffers of some men at the expense of sinking others below the brute.

What an enemy instead of friend of the natural and only reasonable religion, must be the religion which is in full fellowship with these unnatural and enormous crimes! Base indeed must be the religion in which there is not virtue enough to shut up the dram-shop, and to afford shelter to the pursued slave. Base indeed must it have made the people who elect Pro-slavery and dram-shop Legislatures.

We pass on to other illustrations of the spuriousness of the prevailing religion. The American Tract Society justifies its wickedness, also, on the ground of its promise to be wicked. Quite recently it has again, under the plea of its virtual promise to withhold this part of the Gospel, excused itself for refusing "to preach deliverance" to the slaves. As if a promise, be it real or pretended, express or implied, to rob the most persecuted and peeled class of men of that God's testimony for the faithful promulgation of which they are in perishing need, could excuse the robbers! And these superlatively guilty robbers carry on their robbery in the name and with the solemn air and long face of piety, and as if it were a plainly commanded and indispensable duty and service to Him who has said: "I the Lord love judgment: I hate robbery for burnt offering."

Another recent illustration of the falseness of the current religion is afforded in the almost universal sympathy with the murderer of Philip Barton Key. The secular press favored his acquittal. So did a portion of the religious press; and, so far as I know, no portion of it contended for his conviction. But why should he have been acquitted? Because, say his apologists, he was angry when he did the deed. What! the ruin of his wife beget in him the superficial and cheap emotion of anger!

A base man, indeed, must he then be. A noble man in such circumstances would be filled, ay, he might be even killed, with grief. But the sorrow of his soul would be too deep, and would be too sacred and select, to express itself in the vulgar and brutal demonstrations of anger.

We proceed to the most relied-on and popular excuse for the murder. It is that the adulterer deserves to die. But our law does not say so. The law of Moses does, is the reply; and a great parade of it was made both in and out of the Court. So does Moses' law say that "every one who curseth his father or his mother shall be surely put to death." So, too, does it say that to gather sticks on the Sabbath is an offense punishable with death. And what gross inconsistency and glaring hypocrisy it is to hold up some of his laws as obligatory and to make no account of others! Moses, however, did not mean that persons should be put to death for these offenses without having first had a trial. Moreover, his code was for an ignorant and uncivilized people, and it is not for us. Christ is our lawgiver, and he confronts Moses the lawgiver. Christ, rather than have the adulterer suffer the unreasonable punishment of death, would say to him: "Go, and sin no more."

Will the defenders of this murderer stand by their doctrine that, where the law does not provide a penalty private wrath should? Then let them, as consistency and honesty require, look upon the slave, not the seduction only of whose wife and daughters, but the forcible subjection of them to lust, is among everyday actualities as well as possibilities. Let them, I say, look on him, and admit his duty to wreak the deep vengeance of his soul upon those who have trampled down his holy marital and parental rights, as well as all the other rights of his manhood.

Again, are the defenders of this doctrine and this murderer prepared to have the wife of the adulterer go forth to shoot the adulteress? They are, if they are honest and consistent. And again, would they have the seduced rather than the seducer-murdered? Who knows that Key was not the seduced party? Whatever justice at this point he might have been able to do his reputation, he was not permitted to do. For he was first murdered and then tried.

Once more: Are these defenders willing that all persons who

suspect, or, if you please, believe, that their conjugal partner is unfaithful, shall act, pistol in hand, upon the first impulses of their suspicions, or even upon their fully-matured beliefs? For surely, if this action shall be allowed to any, it must be to all. But in ten thousand cases the mind in which such suspicions spring up or such beliefs are matured, would be so swayed by ignorance, prejudice, and passion, as to be utterly incapable of weighing evidence. What, however, if it shall be even a very wise and good man who shall suspect me of a crime?—still, and even if it be a crime ever so worthy of death, I must insist on the right of being tried before I am killed.

In this new order of things, whose life is safe? Not mine; not yours. Every where there are jealous persons silly or stupid enough to be persuaded, though without any reason, of attempts to debauch their wives, or daughters, or sisters. Hence, if this tendency in our country to let the jealous man be judge, jury and executioner in his own case, shall gain as much strength in a few years to come as it has in the last few years, there will not be another country on earth where murder will be so frequent, and the life of an innocent person so insecure. If juries will help arrest the rapid progress of our nation to the lowest barbarism, they must promptly convict the class of murderers to which the murderer of Philip Barton Key belongs. As things are going, they had better let any other class of murderers escape.

But would I not look to the husband to protect the wife from seduction? No—I would look to herself. Her own virtues are her only legitimate earthly protectors from such a fate. All the aid I would require of a husband would be to live such a life before her as should minister strength to those virtues. How degrading to woman is this doctrine that blood must be shed in order to deter men from using her upon their lusts! To what a low place in the scale of intelligent beings does it consign her!

But would I not have civil government prescribe a penalty for sexual intercourse out of wedlock? Certainly I would. Its office, ay, its sole office, is to protect the great natural rights of man: and these are never more flagrantly invaded than by such intercourse. Let me here say that in no land is there civil government. Emphatically true is this in respect to our own land.

Its place here is usurped by a bold and infamous conspiracy against human rights. God made every man to own himself. But this conspiracy which we call Government, allows one man to own another. Again, our Government, like Governments in other lands, instead of protecting life and property, licenses the dram-shop—that immeasurably greatest manufactory of madmen, murderers, and incendiaries. These are illustrative of the spuriousness of the religion which permits them. Another is to be found in land-monopoly. Government, here and elsewhere, allows one man to grasp fifty homes, and to leave thereby forty-nine men homeless. For, beside that we each need but one home, there is but one home for each of us. The defeat of the Grow-amended Land Bill in the last Congress shows that the protection of human rights, which is the great object of the true religion, is no object at all of the popular religion.

Now, it is on the very same principle on which Government should forbid land-monopoly that it should also forbid sexual intercourse out of wedlock. In other words, it should harmonize with nature and the religion of nature, and ordain that every man shall have but one wife, and every woman but one husband. But one, I repeat: for the census tables of all countries show that the sexes are substantially equal in numbers. And with this great fact in nature the teaching of Jesus agrees, when he says, "God made them male and female;" not ten women for one man, nor ten men for one woman; but one for one. On this simple ground, that nature affords but one of one sex to one of the other, should Government punish polygamy; that is, on the simple ground that for Government to allow a man to get two wives, or a woman to get two husbands, would be to allow them to rob their fellows of a great natural right—the right to a wife in the one case, and to a husband in the other. Herein, and herein only, do we see how to reach the solution of that great problem in Utah which so perplexes our statesmen—our poor statesmen who are as ignorant that all questions in the province of politics are to be solved solely in the light of the rights and wants of human nature, as are our poor theologians, that all questions in the province of religion, also, are to be solved solely in that same light.

But it may be said that my argument is against polygamy only—only against a plurality of husbands and wives. I an-

swer that it is equally applicable to the condemnation of the licentiousness which is not practised under the name and shelter of matrimony as to that which is. Government is bound to punish the one as well as the other, for precisely the same reason and with precisely the same severity—the robbery of great natural rights being precisely the same in the one case as in the other. That it is precisely the same is obvious, from the fact that the man whose commerce is not confined to his wife, but is with other women also, robs her of a husband, inasmuch as his licentiousness disqualifies him to be a husband; and robs men of wives by disqualifying those other women to be wives. A similar robbery does the licentious woman practise upon her husband and upon her own sex.

Not very remotely connected with the questions we have just been discussing is that of divorce. This, like the others, is very readily solved in the clear and strong light of authoritative nature. But how puzzling is the problem if we grope for its solution among the uncertain and conflicting interpretations of books! The way that this question is disposed of politically, and for the most part ecclesiastically, is but little in harmony with the teachings of nature, and is a further illustration of the worthlessness of artificial religions, and of the necessity of returning to the religion of nature and reason.

Why should people marry? Because “it is not good that the man should be alone.” Because the human heart yearns for the freest communion and fullest sympathy with some other heart. Because no one is capable of going alone and uncounselled through the trials and perplexities before him; and with no bosom friend to soothe and cheer and sustain him amid the sorrows and sufferings that await him. It is for such reasons, and because joy is thereby doubled as well as pain divided, that the journey of life should be travelled in pairs—each pair being bound together in that mutual love which never wearies of its ministerings, and never forsakes its chosen companion.

Much has been said and written in our day in favor of making a physically healthy offspring the paramount object in choosing a husband or wife. But, in point of fact, it is very rarely made such; very rarely made any object whatever; and, in my judgment, should never be. I would that persons should marry each other simply because they have fallen so deeply in

love as to feel that they must—ay, already do belong to each other; and are irrevocably chosen to care for and bless each other; and can never, while life lasts, be separated from each other. Children are to be regarded not as the direct object, but as one of the natural and unstudied incidents of marriage. I admit that when parents find themselves bringing diseased and miserable children into the world they had better lock up their faculties than multiply such children. Let me here say that it is not only probable that the child of parents, whose marriage sprang from their true love of each other and a deep soul-union with each other, is far more likely to be morally sound than the child of parents who are brought together with about the same calculation for the improvement of human stock as enters into the improvement of breeds of animals; but that it is also probable that he who was born with a poor physical constitution will be like to improve it if he have a good moral one; while he who has a poor moral one will probably be reckless of his physical constitution. Thus has a love-marriage the promise of children healthier, not only in soul, but in the end in body also. Far away, then, from marriage be all calculation. The blindest and most improvident love-match is infinitely preferable to a calculated and calculating match. A marriage, if need be, in the face of all calculation because so brimful of love—a downright can't-help-it marriage—is the true one.

In what cases would I have divorce allowed? I say, with the Catholic Church, in none. But would I not when there is adultery? No, not even then. In any case whatever, it violates great human rights. Nature, as we have seen from the census tables, does not allow it; and Jesus, far greatest of all the moral interpreters of Nature, does not. It is true that there is one offense for which he allows the husband to put away the wife; but he declares him to be guilty of adultery if he marries again. Though we are not bound to cohabit with an adulterous person, nevertheless, not even adultery breaks the tie of marriage. My wife is incapable of becoming the wife of another so long as I live. My crime may be such as to make it incompatible with her self-respect and her other duties to continue to live with me. But she is never to cease from her efforts for my reformation, and she is never to put herself in such circumstances as would disable her from receiving me, should I return to her in peni-

tence. This, however, she clearly would do by marrying another. I know not the genius nor requirements of Christianity if it would have the wife forgive her husband when he repents of his lying or theft, and it would not also have her take him back to her arms when he has repented of his adultery.

I said that my wife ought not to marry another while I am alive; and I have already argued in effect to this conclusion. I have already virtually shown that for her to do so would be not only to wrong me but to practise a robbery upon her sex, some of whom must go unmarried if others have more than one living husband.

I said that in no case should there be divorce. Let it be understood that there can not be, and the caution in selecting a conjugal partner would be greatly increased. Moreover, there would be a fresh motive then for the seasonable healing of those dissensions in married life which are so often allowed to run on and result in mutual estrangement and divorce. But so long as the marriage knot can be untied—even though it can be by adultery only—so long will there be endeavors to untie it. The wicked wife may, for the sake of getting it untied, practise her arts to involve her husband in adultery, and the wicked husband may seek this end by similar means.

I say no more of marriage, only that if it is to be invested with far more of beauty, dignity, and solemnity, and to be made far more productive of blessedness, it must be held to be as enduring as life itself.

Thus have I set before you as far as I well could within the narrow limits of a single discourse the religion of nature. If the one great direct object of true religion is the protection of natural rights, then we must have a natural religion to accomplish it. Natural rights never have been, and never will be, protected under artificial religions; and the fact that they are cloven down the earth over, is conclusive evidence that artificial religions prevail the earth over. Friend of Temperance, friend of Peace, friend of Freedom! work on against Intoxicating Drinks, and War, and Slavery; but flatter yourselves with no hope of permanent or extensive success—until the current religion has been supplanted by the religion of nature. Seeker of reform in politics! the current religion blocks up your way also. Corrupt and crazy as are our politics, they are neverthe-

less no worse than our religion. Nay, they are always one with it. The State is never more rotten than the Church.

We frequently hear the light of nature spoken of as dim and doubtful and deceiving. But, in point of fact, is it not the only clear and bright and sure one? Jesus himself is not another light. He is the perfect medium through which the light of nature shines. The common opinion is that nature is not a sufficient source whence to make up our religion. A much-relied-on proof that it is not, is its failure to teach the doctrine of the resurrection of the body. I admit that it does not teach it. I admit that it teaches the reverse. But this doctrine, which is of so much interest to the superstitious and speculative, natural religion has nothing at all to do with. Its only concern is to make better the moral character of men; and whether this doctrine is true or false does in no wise affect such character. But, saying nothing of his body, does nature teach that man shall live again? Unless she does, how slow should we be to believe it? A doctrine so important as another life is not to be confidently received on any less certain testimony than nature herself. Unless it is at least countenanced by nature, it should not be received at all.

I believe there are strong, I will not say conclusive, proofs in nature that man shall live again. One is, that God made him in His own likeness. That He did so, we endeavored to show in an early part of this discourse. He put into him His own spirit, and made him to be His immortal companion and co-worker. Another of these proofs is, that God made him with wants that this life can not satisfy. The horse and dog, and other creatures, whose knowledge is mainly instinctive, attain here their summit of knowledge, and therefore of enjoyment and usefulness also. But man gathers up all earthly knowledge only to long for more. The more he learns, the more unsatisfied is he with the measure of his learning; and by the very laws of his being, as they stand revealed to him in his own history and experience, he seems compelled to regard his present degrees of knowledge, and consequently of usefulness and happiness also, as but earnestings of their infinite growth hereafter. The more Newton and Humboldt learned, the more they became little children; not only in the growing simplicity of their spirit, but in the conscious poverty of their knowledge. With the

growth of their knowledge grew their sense of their ignorance ; and when they came to die, the rich and deep diapason, made up of all the voices of their being and all the voices of their experience, sounded out the sweet and full assurance that they were but in the infancy of their existence, and that their death was to be not their death, but a new and nobler life.

I have but time to add, under this head, that if the spiritualists are not deceived, they have discovered another and a conclusive natural evidence that man is to live again. It may be many years, however, before the phenomena of spiritualism will be sufficiently accumulated and authenticated to establish in all minds the fact that Nature teaches another state of human existence.

Repeatedly, in this discourse, have I called the religion I am commending the religion of nature. With entire propriety I might always have called it the religion of reason, since it is reason that discerns and approves and adopts it.

I notice that my use of the word reason in former discourses on the religion of reason is criticised. My critics appear to confine the meaning of the word to ratiocination, or the process of reasoning. But does it not also mean the result arrived at through such process? The conclusion that the slave should be set free results from sound reasoning : in other words, is supported by reason, and therefore may be and is called reason. So, too, the conclusion that men should not poison and defile themselves with intoxicating liquors and tobacco is another result of sound reasoning, and comes properly under the name of reason. The right—the right as it is seen in the light of reason—is surely one of the admitted definitions of reason ; and therefore have I felt justified to speak of reason as the standard with which to compare the claims of a religion. Does a religion attribute to God an arbitrary and cruel disposition?—then do I condemn it, because it wars at that essential point with reason. Does it, on the other hand, accord to Him a paternal and loving spirit?—so far, then, do I welcome it, because so far it abides the test of reason.

My efforts the last few years in behalf of the religion of reason, have been construed by many into attacks upon Christianity. Nevertheless, they were intended as an humble means toward saving it. Love to God and love to man are the essen-

tial elements of Christianity; and as nothing can be more reasonable than these, it is impossible that reason should make war upon Christianity. More than this: the religion of reason and the Christian religion are necessarily one. I admit that the religion of reason is a different thing from the spurious Christianity which prevails in every part of Christendom. I admit that all its artillery is directed against that wicked and ruinous counterfeit. But the true Christianity—the Christianity of the Bible—the Christianity taught by the lips and life of Jesus—has no truer friend than reason. Indeed, it is alone by the force of reason, guided and blest of heaven, that a false Christianity can be beaten back from its usurpations, and the true reënthroned.

The religion of reason is indispensable, not only for the purpose of putting to flight a counterfeit, but also for the purpose of preserving the genuine Christianity, and gaining a hold for it on the public heart. It is indispensable not only to show how worthless is the Christianity which is in fellowship with slavery and the dram-shop and other abominations, but also to persuade men of the truth and preciousness of that Christianity which allies itself to no wrong, and sustains every right. To persuade them I mean, by proofs addressed to their understanding, and not by appeals to their superstitious credulity.

Because of their own deep sense of its excellence, Christians have been wont to challenge an unquestioning and unhesitating faith in their religion. They have promptly sentenced to endless woe all who dare to doubt the truth of any position of the Bible, or to call in question any of the principal ecclesiastical interpretations of it. True, many of them have acknowledged in words the right to investigate the popular views of Christianity: but with very few exceptions, they have all abjured it in practice. Even those who tolerate this investigation, do so with the understanding and advertisement that whoever shall dare come to a conclusion opposite their own, will, for a daring so wicked, merit everlasting punishment. But the growing intelligence of mankind will not much longer consent to repose a blind faith in the best religion. It will soon insist that even such a religion must be more than alleged—must be proved—to be true, before men will be bound to believe in it. In the ages of superstition, and in the subsequent ages of speculation,

through which nations pass, a religion does not need to be backed with logic in order to gain currency even with the intelligent. But Christendom has now become so philosophical and practical that nothing except religion can longer pass in it without proof; and before many years more shall have elapsed there will be no longer even this exception.

By the way, this assuming the truth of Christianity as the churches and their members do, is not, as they suppose it to be, honoring Christianity. It is dishonoring it. Truth is honored not by a blind assent to her claims, but by that acquiescence in them which she wins from those who faithfully investigate them. The Bible is insulted by being assumed to be true, but honored by those who think its claims upon their faith worthy to be investigated.

Our claim of superiority for this age will be admitted only with qualifications. Our superiority in general science will be admitted, but not in the science of religion. Is not, however, the delusion as great as it is common, that the one gets ahead of the other? As a general proposition the one always keeps pace with the other. Do you say that France, while on the one hand making rapid progress in general science, has on the other become infidel? I admit it, especially in respect to the intellectual portion of her people. But I claim that her infidelity proves her great progress toward the true religion; for it proves that she is passing out of the superstitious and speculative ages that every nation will yet pass out of, and that she can no longer be satisfied with religions that claim faith without making good their claim. Her call now is for a religion which can be proved to be true; and, unhappily, her belief to a very great extent is that Christianity can not be proved to be true. Such, also, is the call, and to such an extent the unhappy belief of Italy and of some of the German States. Such, too, of vast numbers in England and America, who, in common with vast numbers in other lands, have either become, or always were infidels. But while we rejoice in their escape from the superstitious and visionary, we are nevertheless not blind to their mistake—their great and lamentable mistake—that Christianity can not be proved to be true. What if the churches and priesthood do assume the truth of it, and do virtually forbid the bringing forth of its legitimate and conclusive proofs? Nevertheless the

proofs exist, and the religion of reason will take them up and use them to the scattering of all skepticism, and to the sure and successful planting of the blessed faith in the waste places and fallow grounds of infidelity. The religion of reason will prove that nature teaches love to God and love to man, justice and mercy, and all the elements of Christianity, and that, therefore, Christianity is true. Or, to use another form of statement, the religion of reason will show that Christianity is true by showing that Jesus was, as we have already said, the true moral interpreter of nature.

Such will be the service that the religion of reason will render to Christianity. Of boundless importance, however, as this service will be, it will nevertheless be but an incidental one. The direct object—the sole aim—of the religion of reason is: First, to convince every man that his reason is to be allowed (for his reason alone is authorized) to decide what shall be his conduct and character; and, second, to keep him by means of his own strength and of all the aids of heaven and earth in a state of unswerving fidelity to this high conviction and all its just requirements. God speaks in His creation and providence. Jesus speaks as “never man spake.” His ministry will never cease to pour forth a flood of light. The great and good men and women of every age contribute their measures of enlightenment. But these are all voices for the ear of reason; and not one of them—no, not even that of the Great God—has a right to be heard in the sanctuary of the soul except through the influence of such voice upon the reason. I have been wont to say that the reason of man is the voice of God within him. If this is not literally true, nevertheless that God’s voice reaches him through his reason is literally true. Save that which lies through our reason-wrought convictions, there is not for the Church, nor for the Priesthood, nor for the Bible, any road to those sacred chambers where the mind, under its sole responsibility, because sole master of itself, forms its judgments and comes to its decisions. It is God himself who has ordained this supremacy of reason; and not to acknowledge this supremacy, constantly and practically and gratefully, is to be guilty of rebelling against His government. It is God himself who has made the bringing of all our appetites, passions and pursuits into quick and glad subjection to our reason, the great law of

our nature; and therefore not to obey this law is to prove ourselves traitors to our own nature.

Yet awhile, the religion of reason will continue to be derided and hated. But it will be neither discouraged nor impatient. It will be of good cheer and bide its time. Yet awhile, superstition, bigotry, and prejudice will continue to darken men's minds, and corrupt their hearts, and indispose them to the reign of reason. But the fallacy and failure of every religion which does not make its appeal to reason, become every day more and more manifest; and thus every day is the way becoming clearer and easier for the progress of the religion of reason. It may not soon prevail, but it surely will prevail. Linger however it may, the day will yet dawn when men the earth over will believe that they must let their reason rule them in all things, especially in religion. It will yet be acknowledged that the most reason-ruled man is the most religious man—that to be reasonable is the highest possible attainment: nay, that reason—clear, sound, right reason—is itself religion—the highest and truest religion. But dawn that day when it may, not till then will man become what his Maker made him to be, for not till then will he realize and verify his own grand nature. Not till he shall study to mould himself after the standards and ideals of reason will his life and character be such as to prove to the universe that God made him but “little lower than the angels, and crowned him with glory and honor.”

Do you ask how we shall attain to an understanding of the duties of the religion of reason? I answer by living reasonably. Jesus teaches that the doctrines of God are to be learned by doing the will of God. A similar rule applies in the present similar case. We must not act unreasonably, as do the sectarians—for they organize parties with the *intent* of excluding from them the friends of Christ. As if the friends of Christ could be excluded without his being excluded also! We must not act unreasonably, as do the temperance societies, which will one day denounce the selling of intoxicating drinks as the blackest crime, and will the next use their machinery and members to elect men whose official powers are employed to whitewash this blackest crime and screen it from punishment. Nor must we act unreasonably, as do the Abolitionists, who, though declaring Slavery to be the superlative piracy, do nevertheless

elect men who honor it as law, and thereby give to it their official and sustaining sanction. He is in effect a Pro-Slavery man and not an Abolitionist, who does not hold slavery to be an outlaw, and does not confine his votes to such candidates as hold likewise. Nor must we act unreasonably, as do those clergymen who on one occasion pour out unmeasured execrations upon slavery, and upon another virtually recall and sadly neutralize them by fellowshiping as Christians, and by honoring with their love and commending with their confidence, clergymen who are the most notorious and wicked defenders of slavery. Nor must we act unreasonably, as does that large class of professing Christians who, though recognizing themselves to be "the temple of God," and often praying to be cleansed "from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit," are, notwithstanding, guilty of defiling body and soul with rum, tobacco, or opium.

In all respects and all relations we must act reasonably, if we would see most clearly and learn most fully what *the* one true religion—the religion of nature or reason—calls for. Such reasonable acting will of itself reveal the duties that lie all along our path, and make that path "as the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

But is reason sufficient for all these things? It is. Not, however, unless the Divine influence upon it be unceasing. Man, as much as the planet, needs to be set in motion, and kept in motion by God. Vain is an enlightened reason, unless there be also the God-given spirit of submission to its control. Vain is it that man is made with ability to will and to do, unless he allow his Maker to work in him to will and to do. Vain all his physical, mental, moral powers if he let not Heaven dispose him to put them to a heavenly use. Vain, in a word, is the earthly existence of man unless he shall be born again. But, blessed be God, all the heaven-wrought changes of spirit, purpose, life, which are denoted by the figure of the new birth, and which every man must experience in order to be saved, lie within the reach of every man. If any are left unholy, it is because they refuse to be made holy. If any are cut off from the overflowing fountain of impartial love and free salvation, it is because they cut themselves off from it.

THE ONE TEST OF CHARACTER.

DISCOURSE IN PETERBORO, JULY 22, 1860.

“WHEREFORE by their fruits ye shall know them.” — MATT. 7 : 20.

THESE are the words of Jesus. This immeasurably greatest of all moral teachers bids us judge men not by their profession, but by their practice ; not by their doctrines, but by their deeds ; not by their lips, but by their lives. The saying that “Actions speak louder than words,” is not more trite than true. Words are the lowest, and actions the highest grade of evidence. Jesus did not mean that immoral, profane, polluting, shameless words are not evidence of the bad character of him who utters them. They are in themselves such evidence, and also in the fact that bad words are wont to be accompanied by bad deeds. Evil-speaking and evil-doing go together. No, Jesus meant that good words are not proof that the speaker of them is good. Bad words are bad fruits. But it does not follow that good words are good fruits. Good fruits may be hung upon a tree for the purpose of disguising its bad character. And good words may be spoken dissemblingly by one whose disposition is to speak bad words.

There died a few weeks ago one of the wisest and best of men. I mean Theodore Parker. The churches believe that he was wicked. That he lived an eminently pure and loving and benevolent life, and died a peaceful death, they are constrained to admit. Nevertheless, they hold that he lived and died a wicked man. Why? Because his creed was wrong. His fruit was good ; but he was not good. And this do they hold, notwithstanding Jesus said : “Neither can a corrupt tree bring

forth good fruit;" and notwithstanding, too, that he immediately deduced from this proposition the injunction: "Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them."

It is true, that in rare cases we may possibly be deceived by even this life-test of character. Nevertheless, it is not only our best test, but our only one. It is not for man to look directly upon the heart. All he can do is to argue what is within from what is without. "For man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart."

Outside of the churches, and of the sphere of their conventional religion, men judge one another by their fruits far more than by aught else. Happy that it is so. Else would the world get on far worse than it does. But inside of them the creed is the paramount question. I do not say that it is the sole criterion. I admit that the life also is recognized as one. But this real test is so disparaged by being coupled with the fallacious one of a bundle of doctrines, as to be made nearly vain. From being put upon the same level with a test so entirely empty, it must soon sink far below it, if only for this reason among several, that a sectarian church must lose its distinctive character, and lose itself, if it cease to make its doctrinal test its main one. It is for its very life that such a church shall not cease to do this. That church-members vote for slave-catching and dram-shop candidates, proves that in the eye of the churches such an immorality is as nothing compared with errors of doctrine. In their eye, lying is less sinful than unsoundness in regard to the Atonement.

This making of the creed the test is of course justified on the ground that a man's creed determines his character. Now, I cheerfully admit, that not only does his life give shape to his creed, but that his creed does also give shape to his life. It is, however, his whole creed that does so, and not a very small part of it. It is his ten thousand beliefs, and not some half dozen of them. Just here is the greatest mistake of the churches. A man has this or that view of the future state; this or that view of some of the attributes or offices of Christ; this or that view of one or another ecclesiastical doctrine; and because he has them, the churches approve or condemn him. But what is his creed in regard to feeding the hungry, and clothing the naked, serving the sick, liberating the oppressed,

supplying the homeless with homes, or in regard to innumerable other things, may have very far more to do with the formation of his character than have all these views on which such undue stress is laid. Yes, if we will judge a man by his creed, it should be by his whole creed. But how can we know his whole creed? He does not know it himself. He may be unconscious of even those elements in it which are exerting the most influence upon his character. The most we can do toward learning his creed, is to observe the effect of it upon his life, and to argue its general character from this effect. Even in this wise we may be able to do no more than ascertain, and that, too, with but little correctness, the average or mean proportion of the truths and untruths, reason and superstition, wisdom and folly, mixed up in his creed.

We have already admitted the influence of the creed upon the life. But in the light of what we have just said, it is manifest that we are to deduce the character of the creed from the character of the man, rather than that of the man from that of the creed—or, more correctly, from that of the few known elements of his creed. In this light do we see how absurd it is to make the creed instead of the life the criterion of the character; for in this light do we see that we must look to the life to learn what is the creed.

The churches, in their bigotry and blindness, look at three or four of a man's beliefs, and count them for his whole creed. How foolish are they in not reflecting, that it comprises a vast number of other beliefs, some, or even many of which may be far more busy and successful in moulding the character than are any of those few which have been counted for all. Indeed, it may often be that none of those few beliefs are entitled to be called a part of the creed. They may be but speculations floating in the brain, and wholly distinct from the convictions which are stirring the depths of the soul, and making the life a good or a bad one—a blessing or a curse.

Theodore Parker's creed may have contained errors. But that it was, as a whole, a good one, is proved by his good life. The creed of a liquor-drinking and tobacco defiled Doctor of Divinity, may include much truth; but his vices prove that his creed is radically unsound.

This false standard of character set up by the churches—this

wide departure from that only one set up by Jesus—is fraught with consequences the most deplorable. What less than a bad state of morals is to be looked for in a church where there is more concern because its member has given up the doctrine of election or the doctrine of falling from grace, than there would have been had his life been disgraced and his soul stained by “covetousness which is idolatry”! Or what less than such a state of morals in a church where a member would much sooner be forgiven for getting drunk than for a misapprehension of something in the assumed character of the Virgin Mary! Or in a church where the denial of the Apostolic succession is a graver offense than the occasional soiling of the lips with an oath! Or in a church where sprinkling babies produces more horror than stealing babies!

Self-complacency goes far to promote the growth of bad morals. But how filled with it must he be who is educated to regard devotion to doctrines as the highest merit, and to make far less account of the sins of his own life than of the doctrinal unsoundness of others! The Thugs are probably as self-complacent as our churches. What if they do commit murder every day? Their test of character is not practical goodness. They, too, as well as the churches, reject Christ's test. They, too, as well as the churches, have a creed to go by and judge by.

And bad, too, must be the state of morals outside of the churches, as long as it is so inside; and as long as their claim to be “the light of the world” continues to be acknowledged outside.

A handful of men in this country have, for these twenty or thirty years, been laboring to hold back their fellow-citizens from voting for rum and slavery. But all in vain. To vote thus is not held in the churches to be criminal, nor even in the slightest degree censurable. Nay, it is held to be cunning and commendable, and the reverse to be stupid and fanatical. The *New-York Independent*, no less than the other religious newspapers, would have us all vote a party ticket, even though the candidates upon it be in favor of dram-shops and slave-catching. The church-member may vote power into hands that will use it to perpetuate and multiply the dram-shops, and to return the slave to the hell from which he had escaped—that hell in which

the Bible is not allowed to be read; nor even the name of God to be spelt; and in which parent, husband and wife, are names that carry no sacredness and no rights—and yet he can remain in good standing and in full fellowship with his brethren. But if, instead of having borne these bad and bitter fruits, by which Christ would have him judged, he had so much as cast one doubt upon some favorite tenet in its creed, he would have been hurled out of the church. “By their fruits shall ye know them,” says Christ. By their creed, or rather by half a dozen of the ten thousand things in it, shall ye know them, say the churches.

Every where is the Christ-test dishonored and thrown aside. Even in Peterboro, where so much has been done to restore it, the church-test still prevails. Creeds made up chiefly of a few stereotyped phrases about total depravity, trinity, atonement, election, baptism, etc., are still in the ascendant; and the life is comparatively unimportant. I doubt not that even here in Peterboro there will, at the approaching election, be seen going to the polls, with tickets in their hands for dram-shop and slave-catching candidates, not a few church-members. These, our creed-bound and church-bound neighbors, are conscientious. They have been trained to regard their doctrinal and sectarian churches as very dear to the heart of Christ; and all the world could not suffice to bribe them to lisp a word against their church-creed. Alas! how many ages more must pass away ere ignorance and superstition and bigotry will be so far dispelled as to permit men to see that these churches are, in effect, the worst enemies of Christ; and that the progress of his cause over the earth will be measured by their disappearance from it! They are a libel on his character, and an outrage upon his memory. They have no right to his name. Theirs is another religion than his. Their unconsciousness of the fact does not alter the fact.

We spoke of voting. So paramount to the life is the creed held to be—the profession to the practice—that the good deed of a morally right vote would pass rather to the discredit than credit of one's ecclesiastical soundness. Indeed, it is not too much to say that an uncompromising attitude in behalf of the great and vital reforms is regarded as at least *prima facie* evidence of infidelity. It was their devotion to these reforms that prepared the way for calling Garrison and Phillips infidels.

Must not the church, if only from the necessities of self-defense, stigmatize those who are at work to throw down the abominations which she helps sustain?

Our answer to the inquiry by what means the church has succeeded in thrusting aside Christ's test is, that it has done so by thrusting aside his religion. This religion is simple, intelligible, practical. Ignorance and weakness can comprehend it. It is revealed even unto babes. Its test of character corresponds necessarily with its own character, and is as simple, intelligible and practical as itself. Were this religion the complex and cabalistic one of the churches, the criterion of discipleship—of initiation into its mysteries—could not be simple. So simple, however, is the Christ-religion, that its only criterion of discipleship is the fruits of the life—the every-day conduct in the presence of the world. A religion, the sum total of whose requirements is comprised in the injunction "to do as you would be done by," must of course have a test of character which all men are capable of understanding and applying. But the religion of the churches, not being this common-sense and easily-understood religion, but being a doctrinal and difficult one, must necessarily have doctrinal and difficult tests of character.

How numerous and vast the changes that would result from purging the churches of their spurious religion, and supplying its place with the religion of Jesus! It is in the doctrinal religion that sectarianism lives and moves and has its being. A fish out of water is not more out of its element than is sectarianism when out of the foggy atmosphere of the doctrinal religion. Bring the Roman Catholic and the countless Protestant sects into the sphere of the simple, practical religion of Jesus, and they would quickly die. In that sphere are no facilities and no encouragements to continue their work of comparing tweedledums with tweedledees. But to deny them this work is to deny them their life. Catholics and Protestants would not all die. Their sects only. Good Catholics and good Protestants would still live; and their immeasurably higher life in that sphere would be as much more useful and beautiful as it would be more harmonious and happy.

Once succeed in expelling from the churches their conventional and unnatural religion, and in bringing into its stead the religion of Jesus, and there will never be another book written

about the Immaculate Conception, nor the Apostolic Succession, nor Election, nor the points of Calvinism. Turning these nominal churches of Christ into real churches of Christ, would turn them into associations for feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, delivering the oppressed, lifting up the low, and enlightening the benighted. Their present degrading, useless, pernicious occupations would be gone forever; and they would stand forth glorious witnesses for God and his dear Son in every department of outcast and trampled-down humanity.

The abolition of the doctrinal religion, and, along with it, of sectarianism, could not fail to be followed by the abolition of the technical ministry. Not that a Charles G. Finney, a Beriah Green, a George B. Cheever, and a Henry Ward Beecher would no longer be needed. Far more than ever would they then be sought after:—none of them, however, for the purpose of having them defend this or that group of church-doctrines, but all of them for the purpose of having them persuade men to buy and sell and vote right, and in all respects live right, and thus honor the claims of a practical every day and every where religion.

Theological seminaries would, of course, go down stream along with the doctrinal religion and the technical ministry. A theological seminary is an institution for training men to teach the doctrinal religion. Hence its Greek and Hebrew studies, its metaphysics and abstractions. But to fit men to teach the one true and practical religion, three years spent in an honest lawyer's office, or behind an honest merchant's counter, would avail unspeakably more than that amount of time spent in a theological seminary. Actual contact with a great variety of living heads and living hearts in the busy walks of life serves far more than do poring over books and dreaming over doctrines to furnish the teacher of the religion of Jesus with advantages for making his ministry effectual.

We next inquire how it is that Christendom has consented to remain in bondage to doctrinal religions. The answer is, because her peoples are not yet sufficiently independent and courageous to overcome their habit of submission to authority, nor sufficiently enlightened to desire to overcome it. Every doctrinal religion is a religion of authority, and holds its sub-

jects, not in virtue of being understood by them, but in virtue of its authority over them.

A great curse is the authority which usurps the place of reason. Liberated from their thralldom to this despot, men would soon be more like angels than like the men they now are; and earth would soon be more like heaven than like the earth it now is. For then, feeling their own responsibility for their own steps, they would not submit to be led blindfold by others. For then, where now the million ignorantly and superstitiously and tamely do the bidding of the ecclesiastical and civil power, there would be a million free minds at work, and most of them at work to swell the tide of human wisdom and human happiness. For then, reason being in exercise, where now even in the highest matters it is suffered to be overridden by the claims of authority, truth would commonly be established; and the calmness, order, and beauty which ever wait upon her, would succeed to the confusion and misery that must continue to overspread the earth, so long as it shall be held that ignorant superstitions and cowardly submission better become men than the studying of their duties in the light of their reason.

It is true, that not every one would improve his release from authority. To many it would prove polluting license instead of rational freedom. Nevertheless, even in such cases, it would be more the blameless occasion of revealing an existing character than the responsible creator of a bad one. It is also true that authority can not be dispensed with every where. The child must obey its commands, even its wrong commands, whilst as yet it is too young to see them to be wrong. Oftentimes the sick man, not being able to judge of the prescription for his cure, must submit himself entirely to authority. So, too, when in danger of shipwreck, all on board must conform their efforts to the captain's commands, whether they can or can not see them to be wise. So, too, the jury must acknowledge the authority of the scientific witness or expert, and receive his testimony on subjects they do not comprehend. Authority in such instances is proper, is necessary. Reason approves it. To reject it would be most unreasonable. We war with no authority but that which invades the province of reason; but that, in short, which wars with reason.

The assumptions of authority by Civil Government, and the

abject and wicked submission to them, work very great injury to the human family and very great dishonor to God. It is held that what Government commands, be it right or wrong, must be obeyed. Nay more, that the authority of Government precludes all inquiry into the moral character of its commands. The panting slave must be put back into the pit from which he had escaped, because it is Government that says he must. The innocent Mexicans must be robbed of territory and murdered, because it is Government that says they must. And all this must take place irrespective of what justice and merey and the God of justice and merey say, either in or out of the Bible. Government instead of God is looked to as authority. The Legislature and Judiciary, instead of confining themselves to the declaration of God's law, would have themselves regarded as the very source of law.

What but a boundless authority claimed for Government could have led the Supreme Court of the United States when dooming certain freemen to slavery, to say that: "Every State has an undoubted right to determine the *status* or domestic and social condition of the persons domiciled within its territory?"* And what but their recognition of such authority can induce the people to acquiesce in this opinion of the Court? The Chief-Justice, who delivered it, holds in effect that his State of Maryland can, on his returning to it, make him a slave; and that President Buchanan can likewise be made a slave on his returning to Pennsylvania! By the way, there are perhaps no men who would have less reason to complain of such a fate than these two, who have done so much to fasten slavery on millions.

It is owing in no small part to the recognition by the people of this boundless authority of Government, that they suffer, and even welcome, other intrusions of Government into matters with which Government has legitimately nothing to do. Veneration goes far toward explaining the readiness of the people to let Government meddle with their schools and churches and with their God-given liberty to buy and sell freely in all the markets of the world. The American people are paying three times as great an amount of postage as they would have

* *Strader et al., v. Graham*, 10th Howard.

to pay, were the carrying of letters and papers left to the free competition of companies and individuals. Their blind admiration of a great authoritative power is no small reason why they consent to leave the Post-Office in the bungling and blundering, defrauding and despoiling hands of Government. The legitimate limits of Government are very narrow. They comprise nothing but the protection of person and property. The people of State after State and nation after nation will, as fast as they shall become enlightened, snap asunder the leading-strings of usurped Governmental authority, and assert their right to be no longer treated as children, but to be allowed the liberty of men.

It is, however, in its enormous assumptions in the sphere of religion, that we find authority doing its worst work. To these assumptions more than to the aggregate of all other causes are owing the dwarfed intellect, the shrivelled spirit, the deep debasement of mankind. Reason is competent to determine all the duties of that sphere. Therefore reason should be allowed to reign in it. Nevertheless reason is shut out from it, and authority fills it. Am I asked whether not even God's authority should be welcomed in the sphere of religion? I answer that it exists every where, and should be welcomed every where. But God's authority comes to men through their reason. Reason is the authoritative voice of God in the soul.

I said that a doctrinal religion is a religion of authority. To render it more fully and effectually such, the mass of the doctrines are made so metaphysical or rather so muddy, as to be comprehended not at all by the common intellect, and scarcely at all by the uncommon intellect. Take for instance the doctrines of the religion, which is current among ourselves. Not more than ten men in this town, if called on to explain them, would be able to make a decent show of understanding them; and even the ten men, including if you please all the ministers, would interpret them quite differently. Not two of them would agree at all points. In the presence of these mystical phrases, that abound in the formulary of the church faith, learning is about as much at fault as ignorance. Whether you have or have not been to college makes but little difference in your attempt to understand them.

How amazing that the common-sense of mankind should

suffer these unintelligible doctrines to be made tests of character ! But even were they intelligible, it would scarcely be less absurd to make them such. The longer I live, however, the more do I see that even common-sense prostrates itself before an ecclesiastical religion. Such religion is authority : and men of sense as well as men of nonsense have been trained not to dare to speak nor even think against authority.

The true religion is a reasonable one—a “reasonable service”—to use the words of the Apostle. It makes its appeal directly to reason. Says its great Teacher : “And why judge ye not even of yourselves what is right ?” Observe that he does not say : “Why *feel* you it not ?”—or “Why *fancy* you it not ?”—or “Why *receive* you it not upon the authority of the priesthood, the council, the church, the book ?” But he says : “Why *judge* ye not ?”—or what is the same : “Why *reason* ye not what is right ?” That Jesus should thus submit his religion to the reason of his hearers is not strange when we consider the exceeding simplicity of its character. That the churches can not do so with theirs is obvious from the fact that instead of being, as his is, universally intelligible, it is a technic, a trade, a mystery. Whilst his religion is apparent to reason at first sight, their unintelligible one claims assent by force of authority. Whilst his religion courts the severest trials of reason, and comes out of them all brighter and stronger, theirs is horrified that reason should presume to pass upon religion.

Mohammedans, Hindoos, and other Eastern peoples, are more earnest and devout worshipers than Christians. This is the natural result of their being less enlightened. For being so, they are the more ready subjects of authority, and the more implicit believers in the dogmas which that authority imposes upon them. In this wise is it explained that the Roman Catholic has so much more faith, and earnestness, and zeal than the Protestant. For whatever may be said of the equality of educated Catholics with educated Protestants, all must admit that, in point of intelligence, the Catholic masses fall below the Protestant. Never were Protestant nations and communities increasing so rapidly in knowledge as in our day ; and, therefore, never were Protestant infidels (infidels in the sense of having forsaken their ecclesiastical faith) multiplying so rapidly. These infidels have become too enlightened for their religion. They

have outgrown a doctrinal religion. If a religion of authority would once do for them, it nevertheless can do for them no longer. Their religious want, lying deep in their rational nature, can now be supplied with nothing less than a rational religion; with nothing less than the religion of Jesus. It will yet come, by means of the rapid enlightenment of the Protestant world, that between reason on the one hand and authority on the other, there will be no room left for Protestantism. As a religion of authority, Roman Catholicism is admirable. In the breaking up of the Protestant churches, such of their members as shall still prefer a religion of authority, will go off to Catholicism, and the remainder will mount up to the religion of reason.

The doctrinal religion would soon lose its hold on the public mind, were it not kept wrapped up in mystery. Mystery is as indispensable here, as in the occupation of Signor Blitz and his fellow-jugglers. Preachers there are of this religion, who would no sooner consent to lay bare its methods and machinery than would a quack doctor to reveal the hidden sources of his boasted skill, and tell the ingredients of his never-failing medicine. Their use of the Bible (and by some of them a juggling use) is what chiefly enables our clergy to maintain the authority of their doctrinal religion. They say that this book—all of it, every chapter and every sentence of it—came from God. Whoever denies, or even faintly doubts this assertion, is a hated, persecuted infidel. Moreover, he is such if he fails to find in it—although ever so honestly intent on finding them—some of the doctrines which the clergy claim to be in it. Protestants encourage a freer reading of the Bible than do the Catholics. But what of that? The Protestant who ventures to oppose the standard interpretations of the Bible, is as promptly and cordially anathematized as is the Catholic, who makes a similar experiment upon ecclesiastical tolerance.

How happy if all the preachers in Christendom could be induced to rise in their pulpits on a given Sabbath, and tell their congregations how the world came by the Bible. This honesty and bravery would be followed by a greater revolution than the world has ever yet seen; and it would be no less blessed than great. Should all the clergy of Peterboro tell their hearers next Sunday the simple facts in the case, Peter-

boro would be filled with astonishment at the news; and she would be enlightened as she never had been. The thick church-clouds, which still envelop our people, would disappear almost as suddenly and almost as visibly too, as the mists of the morning before the rising sun. It is of little avail—certainly of little present avail—for persons not belonging to the churches, to tell these simple facts. They can not get a hearing. The men who have parties to back them up, can alone be heard in this party-ridden, party-governed world. The men whose consciences compel them to stand outside of both the political and ecclesiastical parties, must be content to live and die without exerting the influence which their “soul breaketh for the longing that it hath” to exert. Perhaps, however, (and this is their hope and consolation,) that years or ages after they shall have been gathered to their fathers, rich harvests of good to man and glory to God shall be reaped from the seed which they sowed in faith and watered with tears.

Yes, great indeed would be the sensation in these congregations of Christendom, should their preachers confess to them that the Bible is but a selection from a great heap of Jewish writings. Greater still would it be, should they proceed to confess, that some of these writings were selected, and some of them rejected, by small majorities. And into what astonishment and staring would not these congregations be wrought, when their preachers had added that the compilers of the Bible lived in a dark and superstitious age; that no one pretends that they were inspired; and that history, so far from informing us of their intellectual or moral character, has not preserved so much as the name of even one of them!

Many, who juggle others with the Bible, are themselves juggled by it. It is often the case that men become the dupes of their own dupings. A striking instance of this have we in the Rev. Dr. Gardiner Spring. He justifies slavery. He would not liberate the slaves even if he could do so by offering up a single prayer. He would have his poor colored brothers and sisters sent back into the pit from which they had escaped! Now, whence comes all this diabolism? It comes from his believing in the blasphemous nonsense which ecclesiastical authority attributes to the Bible. He believes that God cursed the blacks—and with so enduring a curse that, even in the mil-

lennium, they are still to suffer under it. He confounds the belchings of drunken Noah's anger with the curse of God. But what blasphemous nonsense is it, that God curses his children! Alas! how still prevalent are the Pagan conceptions of "OUR FATHER," who loves all and hates none, who blesses all and curses none! Doubtless Dr. Spring believes, in common with the churches, that God was such a bloody monster as to command the Jews to torture and slay innocent women and children. All these absurdities, which he has been so long trying to make others believe, he has come at last to believe himself. Very likely that fifty years ago he thought he believed them. That he now really believes them is owing not a little to the reflex influence upon himself of his teachings to others. In duping others he has duped himself.

The authoritative interpreters of the Bible have made nearly the whole of Christendom believe that it teaches that children are born devils; and that dying in childhood, they must all drop into an eternal hell, unless the blood of Christ, or baptism, or something else exterior to themselves, shall save them from this fate. I do not believe that this doctrine is taught in the Bible—this doctrine of innate total depravity, on which rests the superstructure of the theology of Christendom. But if I did, I should nevertheless refuse to be guilty of such a total and abject renunciation of my reason as to believe in the monstrous doctrine. To believe in it would be to transmute my loving Father into the most hateful of all tyrants. To believe in it, would be to cut all the sinews of my obligation to love and honor Him. This doctrine must be cast out of Christendom before Christendom will become like Christ. We admit that thousands of good men believe in it; but their goodness exists notwithstanding it, and not because of it.

As I have already said, I do not believe that this doctrine is in the Bible. David's saying, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me," only proves that the dear penitent was in a mood to write the bitterest things against himself. And Paul's words to the Ephesians, from which the translators and the churches argue that we are all by nature "the children of wrath"—objects of the Divine wrath—mean, probably, but little else than that men are naturally, as he taught the people of Lystra, "of like passions." Moreover,

I have but little respect for whatever in the Bible is at war with the teaching of Christ: and if this book says that children are hell-born, nevertheless He says that "Of such is the kingdom of heaven." I believe that children are born good, and become bad; born religious, and become irreligious. I do not mean that they all become bad and irreligious, though it is certain that the great mass of them do. That they do is in my judgment owing in no responsible way to human nature; nor in any comparatively large degree to the imperfections which they inherit from those who had violated the physical, intellectual, or moral laws of that nature; but mainly to the misleading and corrupting influences to which, not in their first years only, but even in their early months also, they are subjected by others.

Not only do I believe that they who die in childhood go to heaven in virtue of their intrinsic and inborn state, but I also believe that men and women can not go to heaven until they have first become as little children—simple, sincere, ingenuous, trustful as little children. Jesus himself says they can not.

Again, these authoritative teachers hold that the Bible declares Christ to be the essential God, and that whoever doubts the doctrine must perish. I do not think it is taught there. As I view it, Christ teaches that he is one with the Father in no other sense than that in which he would have us all one with each other and one with the Father. But this is a great sense; and identifies him in spirit and moral character with God himself.

The world had one God. It did not need another. But it needed a perfect man; and in Christ that was given to it. Had reason been allowed its freedom in the Bible and in religion, this perfect man, "the measure of the stature of whose fulness" is reached in being a perfect man, would have been left to the world. But that same authority, which thrust out reason from the Bible and religion, carried him away from the sphere of simple manhood where, and where only, he was needed; and sublimated him into a superfluous God. Never, until he shall again be restored to that sphere which was robbed of him, will he be generally held, even by the mass of Christians, to be in all things the example of men. And never, until he shall be so held, will they follow or even aim to follow him in all things.

We set before a bad little child the example of a good little one. But who would be so foolish as to think of weaning

early childhood from its perversities by commending to it the ripe harvests of truth and virtue in the life of some precious white-haired saint? The space between them would be too wide to make the example influential. But infinitely wider is the space between man and God—between the best man and Jesus, if Jesus is God.

Christians will agree with the propositions that Christ would not vote for slave-catching and dram-shop candidates; and that he would not take up a gun to shoot people. But the mass of them will thus agree, because, believing him to be God, they believe that he would not vote for any one, and would not take up a gun for any purpose. They will thus agree, because they believe that to talk of his handling a vote or a gun is to drag him down from Godhood to manhood. It needs a man to be an example for men. In respect to some sublime abstractions we may aspire to copy God. But in respect to the practical, every-day concerns of life, He will never be our example. For that we need a man—a man “of like passions” with ourselves; our fellow, who can walk by our side without having to come out of his sphere and down from his nature; and who can walk with us every where where it is right for us to walk, and do every thing which it is right for us to do. Whatever may be said to the contrary, the great body of Christians will never, so long as they look upon Christ to be God, or a being compounded of God and man, make him their example in the whole range of human affairs. They will continue, as now, to go a little way with him, and a great way against him. They will weep with Christ over the slave, over the landless, over the dram-shop-ruined family, and over the desolations of war; and then they will turn against him and vote for slavery and land-monopoly and the dram-shop and war. Some twenty years ago I was urging a man to vote for the slave on the ground that God votes for him. He laughed in my face, and told me that God doesn't vote. He shut out God from the ballot-box. And so also do the great mass, who believe him to be God, shut out from it Christ and his example and influence.

I do not forget that in these remarks I have exposed myself to the inquiry whether Unitarians do actually more than Trinitarians, make Christ their example in all things. The comparison should be between Unitarians who really believe in Christ,

and Trinitarians who really believe in him. Both the one and the other are few. Really to believe in Christ is to be imbued with his spirit, established in his principles, and identified with his aims. To such belief, the view that he is or is not God, is in no wise essential. All who thus really believe in him will make him their example. But they who connect with this belief the belief that Christ is but a man—but a man, although filled with his Father's spirit—would, in ten thousand instances, be far more like to recognize his example than would they who believe him to be God. Admit that in every matter of life they would both feel his precept—nevertheless, to associate his example with it, might be as violent and unusual for the one party as it would be natural, easy and common for the other.

To return to the Bible. It is not perfect. No work of man is. Inconsiderable, however, are the mistakes which are mingled with its essential, sublime and saving truths. Few and small are the spots upon this glorious sun. No where else does the human heart come in contact with such eloquent and mighty inspirations. And in more enlightened ages, when human authority shall be driven out of the realm of religion, and human reason shall be installed in its place, the Bible will be no longer an object of blind idolatry, but a treasure comprehended by the understanding and cherished by the soul. Then its religion, instead of being but the superstition of Christendom, will be the accepted and sound religion of the whole world. For the religion of the Bible is a reasonable religion; and when reason shall be left free to investigate the claims of the Bible—to approve here and disapprove there—upon its own solemn responsibility—this book of books will be found to commend itself triumphantly, even to that severe investigator. Its standard teachers make it say much that is very good, and much that is very bad. They make it a book of the very best, and also of the very worst influences. Many a great folly here, and many a great crime there, do they make it sanction. Not a few of them would have us go to the Bible for a warrant for slavery. But as well might they bid us look into heaven for Satan as into this precious book for such warrant. Moreover, the effect of finding slavery in the Bible could not be to whitewash slavery. It could be only to leave a big black blot upon the Bible.

That there are good men in Christendom with great sins

upon them proceeds more from the worship of the Bible and of its authoritative interpretations than from all other causes. I am often censured for my belief that there are pious slaveholders. Nevertheless there are such, and ever will be, wherever slavery exists, and there is also a worshiped book. Interpretations of the book are made to suit the interests of its worshipers, and thus to blind them. The great wickedness which there is in some of these interpretations is not perceived by all—no, no even by all who are blessed with Christian discernment. There are sins, and great ones too, which can be so presented as to deceive and win the approbation of even a Christian. But this can no longer be so, after he shall have come to let his reason instead of his Fetich-book decide moral questions for him. If the idolatry of a book and of its authority-imposed interpretations can so pervert the vision that even slavery shall appear right, nevertheless in the light of reason there can be no such illusion. No pious slaveholders will there be after the reasonable and practical religion of Jesus shall have taken the place of bundles of theory and superstition.

Never, never can the Bible be loved as it should be by any one, who feels himself shut up to it as an authority, and his free inquiry into the truthfulness of any of its pages forbidden. It can be intelligently and truly loved only so far as reason grasps it. The much talk that we are bound to love things in the Bible, which are above our reason, is all nonsense. We can believe only so far as belief seems reasonable; and we can not love what we can not believe. The Bible is of but little use to those who receive it without understanding it. The difference between the Bible received upon authority and the Bible received through the reason is the difference between undigested and digested food.

What a blessing to the world will not the Bible be when, instead of being clung to superstitiously and bigotedly and hypocritically and compulsorily, REASON shall own its truth, and be imbued with its elevating and sanctifying spirit! The Bible speaks reasonably through reason. But it speaks absurdly under authority. It is the policy of authority to teach absurdities. In proportion to its teaching of the reasonable, would it leave less room for itself, and make more for reason. This authority will quite vanish from the world when the world shall

come to have less taste for the conventional than the natural, for the reasonable than the absurd.

It is this religion of authority which accounts for the poor character of the great mass of church-members. Large-hearted men, such as William Goodell and George B. Cheever, are working hard to arouse them to take hold of the great Reforms so vital to mankind. But they will find their work to be nearly in vain. It had far better be expended upon the more hopeful material outside of the churches—upon the men whose humanity is not suffocated by a spurious religion. The current religion, warring upon reason with its authority, and appalling the heart with its pagan terrors, and substituting policy for principle, is just the magnet to draw into the churches the base and the timid; and is just the power to reduce to baseness and timidity the braver and loftier spirits, who here and there find their way into them.

The espousal of these Reforms, and an unflinching, life-long adherence to them requires honesty, disinterestedness and courage. But the last place to look for the growth of these high qualities is under the shadow of an authority religion. Look there for selfishness and abjectness, cowardice and corruption. The noble man you find there is the rare exceptional case, in which resistance is successfully maintained against influences so generally irresistible. A servile spirit and a shrunken intellect are the common and legitimate product of the religion of the churches. So it is, that whilst the true church of Christ is the school for producing the choicest specimens of humanity, these sham churches of Christ are the manufactories of the meanest.

I am well aware that I speak offensively. Nevertheless, do I not speak truly? What is meanness if tyranny is not? What is the meanest of all meanness if it is not that tyranny which would "rob the poor because he is poor"? But of this very type of superlative meanness is the tyranny of American slavery; and of American slavery are the American churches the bulwark. To this bear witness not only James G. Birney and Albert Barnes, but every other man of just observation. Why, even the churches of William Goodell and George B. Cheever will, at the coming election, and this, too, notwithstanding the remonstrances of these faithful men, vote, not only for dramshop candidates, but also for slave-catching candidates.

No, the first work of the Goodells and Cheevers is to set themselves to displace, with the reasonable religion of Jesus, this authority-religion of the churches—this corrupting and crushing religion. Until this is done they will, as I have already substantially said, do well to look for fellow-reformers outside of the churches—to look for them among the men whose generosity and manliness have not been conquered by the withering influences which prevail inside of the churches.

Yet awhile the churches will continue to be jealous of reason; and no wonder, for it is their enemy—the enemy of all human authority in religion; and hence, the enemy of all doctrinal religions. Yet awhile the churches will continue to talk foolishly about reason, and to deny its right to pass upon religion. Yet awhile the churches will consider it a mark of piety to speak disparagingly of reason, and will regard themselves as honoring God by pouring contempt on this noblest attribute of man. Nevertheless, God is not with them in this folly. In his sight human reason is greater than the sun and stars. Not only would He have the Bible passed upon by reason, but He submits his own works and ways—nay, his own self—to the inquiries and tests of human reason. I do not say that He submits them to the bundle of passions and prejudices which men are wont to confound with reason. Nor do I say that men can, by exercising their reason in a proud spirit, learn all of God that they need to know. They will learn little of Him, unless they shall exercise it in an humble spirit. Nor do I say that human reason can, without the help of divine influences, discern divine things. “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” They alone who have purity of heart have the heaven-anointed vision. They alone who are “born again” have a reason enlightened and trustworthy in spiritual things. They alone can see the kingdom of God. “Verily, verily I say unto thee: Except a man be born again, he can not see the kingdom of God.”

Permit me to close my Discourse with a few words respecting this Church, which, taking the name of its locality, as did every Apostolic Church, calls itself “The Church of Peterboro.” It is now nearly seventeen years since we gathered ourselves from the sects. We could no longer endure the sectarian or creed-tests. We believed in Jesus Christ, and we therefore held that

men should be judged by their lives instead of their lips—by their deeds instead of their doctrines. From that day to this we have been misrepresented and maligned by the sects; and from this time onward all who refuse to adopt the Christ-test as the one test of character, will have no patience with us. We are stigmatized as “The Infidel Church”—but not at all so because of our lives—and only so because we reject the tests of sectarianism, and persevere in knowing men—approving or disapproving them—“by their fruits.” Most of all, are we disliked and spoken against when “Election” is at hand—especially one of unusual interest. Such an election now agitates the country. The candidates of the sectarian churches will, as usual, be slave-catchers and dram-shop upholders; and our little Church will, as usual, insist on practical righteousness, and condemn voting for such candidates.

We are told, that a Church should not meddle with politics. There is, however, nothing on earth, that should give it more concern. Politics, rightly interpreted, are the care of all for each—the protection afforded by the whole people to every one of the people; and hence a Church might better omit to apply the principles of Christ to every thing else than to politics. Manifestly, I am not speaking here of the satanic politics, which have ever cursed every part of the world, but of the Heaven-commanded and Heaven-imbued politics, which have never yet extended their blessed sway over **any** people. Manifestly, I am speaking not of the politics which are, but of the politics which are to be.

We are told that a Church should say nothing against the wickedness of voting, even for the worst candidates. But we claim, that no wickedness lies outside the jurisdiction of a Church, least of all the wickedness which its members are in danger of perpetrating.

Rum and Slavery may be called the two great “Institutions” of this country. They sway the political parties, and these in turn sway the churches. Were the churches more concerned for right-doing than for acceptable professing, they would be effectual breakwaters against the tide of corruption, which the parties pour over the land. But not being churches of Christ, they are easily turned into tools of the parties. Their morals never rise higher than the morals of the parties. They never

lead. They always follow. The morals and manners of a church should be such, as to realize our highest conceptions of human dignity. But these sham churches, too low to be taken into partnership even with politicians, are but taken into their service.

Church of Peterboro! Be true to your own God at the approaching Election. He is not your God, who would have men vote for candidates who are in favor of a white man's Party, and of excluding the black man from suffrage and citizenship. For your God "made of one blood all nations," and is impartial and loving toward them all. He is not your God, who would have men vote for candidates in favor of seizing the poor innocents, as they fly from the pit of slavery, and of casting them back into it. For your God would have the ruler do justice to the "poor of the people, save the children of the needy, and break in pieces the oppressor." His rulers, in making report of their administrations, can say as the Buchanans and Pierces have never said, that they "brake the jaws of the wicked, and plucked the spoil out of his teeth." He is not your God, who would have men vote for candidates who recognize a law for slavery. For a law for slavery is a greater and crueller absurdity than a law for murder. Every right-minded man would see his children in the grave rather than in the chains of slavery. Daniel knew no other law than "the law of his God." Nor did Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. "Peter and the other apostles answered and said: 'We ought to obey God rather than men.'" But the God of all these is He whom you have chosen to be your God. Cling to Him, and you are safe. Cling to Him, and you shall not be washed away, even by the high-dashing waves of corrupt politics, which, meeting with no resistance in the churches that exalt doctrines above duties, strew the land with wrecks at every returning election, and prove how vain, in times of temptation, is every other religion than the practical religion of Jesus Christ.

BIBLE CIVIL GOVERNMENT.

DISCOURSE IN PETERBORO, Nov. 18TH, 1860.

ANOTHER Election has come and gone. Much of good, in both its near and remote results, do we look for. Nevertheless, we are not to overlook its many baleful influences, and its wide havoc of virtue and happiness. We have again passed through the great quadrennial Demoralization, which sinks into a lower deep tens of thousands of drunkards; which turns into drunkards tens of thousands of the sober; which makes tens of thousands of new liars, and makes worse tens of thousands of old ones; which cheapens sincerity and simplicity, by putting high prices upon intrigue and dishonesty; which puts falsehood for truth and darkness for light, and makes ten appeals to passion and prejudice where it makes one to reason.

While, however, we affirm that this is the general character of a Presidential Election, we are free to admit that some of the actors in it are candid, and some of the influences in it enlightening and elevating. But with all this, and every other conceivable alleviation, still who does not see that a Presidential Election frightfully lowers the standard of morality, pours tides of wickedness through all ranks and classes, and preys fatally with its rampant vices on numberless bodies and numberless souls? Many and mighty are the influences needed to redeem great popular Elections from the coarseness and corruption which characterize them. Preëminent among these influences is the presence and the part of woman. The conduct and character of men as voters will become far better after the advancing stages of civilization shall have brought up women to vote by their side.

And where were our church people in the late Election? They were voting for slave-catching and dram-shop candidates. Nay, some of them were themselves such candidates. Our church people were mixed up with the abominations of the Election, and not a few of them were drenched in its corruptions.

I turn for a moment from the church people to notice the fact that even the rescuers of slaves did, with very few exceptions, vote for these candidates. In their measureless inconsistency and infatuation they voted power into hands ready to use it both for re-seizing the slave and punishing his rescuers. Doubtless these inconsistent and infatuated men will still wonder that we should refuse to join them in celebrations of slave-rescues.

To return to the church people. It must be confessed that thousands of them honestly believed that their candidate would be found faithful to all the claims of freedom and righteousness, and it must also be confessed that, but for this belief, they would not have voted for him. Admit, too, will we that thousands of them voted as they did because they believed the Constitution to be for slavery, and thousands because they believed the Bible sustains it. I believe both to be against it. But what if both are for it? Why, only that both are so far void of obligation. The Bible and the Constitution are the work of men; but Freedom is the great gift of the great God. Hence, believing, as I do, with "Peter and the other Apostles that we ought to obey God rather than man," I must insist that all shall go for freedom, however the Constitution and the Bible may go. "The law of his God," or, in other words, the law of Justice, was Daniel's law, and it should be every man's law, the Constitution and even the Bible to the contrary notwithstanding.

Will the church people never believe in the religion of the Bible? They believe in its theologies and its philosophies, or in what are interpreted to be such. Why will they not believe in its religion also? One answer is, that they are sectaries; that their sects are organized to uphold, some this part and some that of these theologies and philosophies; and that in this wise religion is in general greatly undervalued, and

often quite ignored or lost sight of. Indeed, the mistake becomes almost universal among them, that these theologies or philosophies are themselves religion, or at least a part of it, and that their zeal and contention for them have all the merit of zeal and contention for religion itself. Another explanation is, that whilst the good man alone is willing to be religious, these theologies or philosophies are a substitute for religion so cheap and easy that the wickedest man finds no cross in adopting them. And still another explanation of the refusal of these church people to receive the religion of the Bible is, that whilst this true religion enters a man's heart through his heaven-enlightened and heaven-sanctified reason, they are educated to distrust reason in the province of religion, and to receive upon authority what passes with them for religion. Much, too, might be said to show that religions imposed by authority are not only like to differ very widely from the religion which a sound understanding and a sound heart make their own, but are also peculiarly effective in shutting it out.

I have spoken of the religion of the Bible as one with the true religion. It manifestly is; and nowhere else is that true religion presented so simply, so sublimely, or so perfectly. Foolish skepticism rejects the Bible; credulous and unquestioning superstition gulps it down. But reason—the reason blest with divine illumination—the reason coupled with a renewed heart—though sitting, as it is bound to do, in stern and unsparing, whilst yet in meek and humble judgment, on the Bible, and deciding for itself on the popular interpretations of it, and on the theological and philosophical structures built upon it, comes at last to acknowledge the preëminence of its inspirations and the truth of its religion.

What is the religion of the Bible? The churches hold that it is largely contained in their speculations and theories respecting Trinity, Atonement, Heaven, Hell, etc. But the Bible resolves it into love, especially love to the destitute and afflicted. It says that "God is love," and that man should be also. It says that "Love is the fulfilling of the law," and that "All the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." It says that to do justice to the poor and needy is to know God. (Jeremiah 22:16.) It says

that "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this: To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." It says: "Remember them that are in bonds as bound with them, and them which suffer adversity as being yourselves also in the body." It says: "Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I burn not?" It says, in short, that the whole of religion consists in doing as you would be done by. The churches make religion to consist mainly in creeds, but the Bible wholly in deeds, and in the spirit of which they are the necessary outflow. Church religion dreams, but Bible religion bids us do.

Nothing in all the Bible, save the life of Jesus, which was given to reflect before men the life of the Father, and in which the character of God shines out in the character of the God-filled Man, is so rich in tenderness and beauty and so powerful in appeals to love and admiration as its portrayal of righteous civil government. Nothing, with that exception, so clearly and attractively reveals the genius of the religion of the Bible. How little the church people appreciate this religion is manifest from their indifference to the Bible view of civil government. Altogether welcome to them would be this view, and altogether corresponding with it their political action, did they but love this religion.

Civil government is, in the eye of reason, the collective people caring for each of the people—the combination of all for the protection of each one. Such is it also in spirit and scope on the pages of the Bible. We there see it to be, next to God himself, the great Protector; and, as is reasonable, the special Protector of the innocent and helpless poor. The Bible requires for civil rulers "able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness;" men who "shall judge the people with just judgment, shall not respect persons, neither take a gift;" "shall judge [do justice to] the poor of the people, save the children of the needy, and break in pieces the oppressor." Of this true and Bible type of civil rulers was Job, who says: "I delivered the poor that cried; and the fatherless and him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me, and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. I put on righteousness, and it clothed me;

my judgment was as a robe and a diadem. I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame. I was a father to the poor, and the cause which I knew not I searched out. And I brake the jaws of the wicked, and plucked the spoil out of his teeth." I am always pained when I hear Christians praise certain persons as great statesmen. Great statesmen they are—not because they care for the poor, for they uphold statutes and execute decrees for enslaving and crushing the poor—but because they have talents and learning, and talk ingeniously and eloquently about banks and tariffs and internal improvements, and prate cunningly and winningly of human rights. Were these Christians more Christians, they would see more statesmanship in that noble ruler who "was a father to the poor" than in the sum total of those sham statesmen who are so unwisely and guiltily lauded.

For the reason that it looks upon the civil ruler as the protector of the needy, the Bible says to him: "Open thy mouth for the dumb in the cause of all such as are appointed to destruction. Open thy mouth, judge righteously, and plead the cause of the poor and needy." "Seek judgment, relieve the oppressed." "Let the oppressed go free: break every yoke." It is for this reason that it pronounces, "Wo unto them that decree unrighteous decrees and that write grievousness which they have prescribed; to turn aside the needy from judgment and to take away the right from the poor of my people;" and says: "Execute judgment in the morning, and deliver him that is spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor."

We can not mistake the Bible apprehension of civil government, when it tells us that "rulers are not a terror to good works but to the evil;" nor when it says that the ruler is "the minister of God," or, in other words, acts on and acts out the principles of God. And who can mistake it, or fail to be touched and melted by it, when he reads the injunction upon civil government: "Take counsel, execute judgment, make thy shadow as the night in the midst of the noon day; hide the outcasts, bewray [betray] not him that wandereth. Let mine outcasts dwell with thee; be thou a covert to them from the face of the spoiler." Or who can misapprehend it, or not be moved by it, when he reads: "Thou shalt not de-

liver unto his master the servant which is escaped from his master unto thee. He shall dwell with thee, even among you, in that place which he shall choose, in one of thy gates where it liketh him best: thou shalt not oppress him."

I need quote no further from the Bible to prove that the civil government it commends is the protector of the innocent and helpless poor; nor to prove how widely it contrasts with the civil governments of the whole earth, and especially with the oppressive and murderous rule which in our own nation usurps the name of civil government—a rule so sanctioned by the priesthood and upheld by the people, as forcibly to recall the prophet's description of a similar conspiracy: "There is a conspiracy of her prophets in the midst thereof, like a roaring lion ravening the prey; they have devoured souls; they have taken the treasure and precious things; they have made her many widows in the midst thereof. Her priests have violated my law, and have profaned my holy things; they have put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they showed difference between the unclean and the clean, and have hid their eyes from my sabbaths, and I am profaned among them. Her princes in the midst thereof are like wolves ravening the prey, to shed blood, and to destroy souls, to get dishonest gain. And her prophets have daubed them with untempered mortar, seeing vanity, and divining lies unto them, saying: Thus saith the Lord God, when the Lord hath not spoken. The people of the land have used oppression and exercised robbery, and have vexed the poor and needy: yea, they have oppressed the stranger wrongfully." Need I add that the civil government of this land is the devourer, instead of the protector, of the poor? and that, while continuing to devour them with Land Monopoly and Rum and Slavery, the protection it boastingly and lyingly professes and promises is no better than that which the prophet here describes—the protection which wolves give to lambs?

I have said enough to warrant me in asserting—

First. That of all the institutions of earth, civil government is unspeakably the most important.

Second. That religious men only are fit to bear civil rule, and that therefore none other should be chosen for it. This

says Reason, and this says the Bible, whose religion is the religion of reason. In what sublimely eloquent and commanding language is it said by the Psalmist, when, having reserved it for his last, because most important utterance and admonition, he exclaims: "The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue. The God of Israel said, The Rock of Israel spake to me: He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. And he shall be as the light of the morning when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain."

Surely none but a religious man can answer to the Psalmist's description of the civil ruler. Surely none but a religious man can have the broad, undeviating justice, the honest, comprehensive care for others, the quick, tender, and thorough sympathy with the poor, helpless, and trodden-down, which should ever characterize the civil ruler.

Are not religious better than irreligious men? None can doubt it. Why, then, should they not be chosen to fill the most important and responsible places in human affairs? That they are not, dishonors religion and sets reason at naught. If religious men are needed anywhere, it is in the capacity of civil rulers.

My hearers know what I mean by a religious man, and they will not go away saying that I refuse to vote for persons unless they belong to the Church. I vote for those who do and for those who do not belong to it. But I aim to vote for religious persons only. Believing in the Bible, and accepting its religion with my whole head and heart, I am shut up to such voting. Other men, and immeasurably better than myself, can vote otherwise. But I can not. I can not without severing my connection with this Book of books, dishonoring and disowning my God-given and God-present reason, debauching my conscience, and sinking myself into atheism.

With me a religious man is simply a just man. Show me a just man, and you show me a religious one. The more just he is the more religious he is. And when, under the new-creating influences of Heaven, he has reached the sublime height of doing in all things as he would be done by, then has he ful-

filled the claims of justice and religion, of the Bible and reason, of earth and heaven. Beliefs in regard to the Trinity, Atonement, Election, etc., etc., have their value. They may favor or hinder religion; but they are no part of it.

Say not that my stress on doing ignores faith. Say not that I forget the Bible words: "The just shall live by faith." Readily do I admit that our moral and spiritual nature can not live unless it be fed by faith. But in what must this faith be? Must it be, as is generally held, in ecclesiastical dogmas and formulas? No; but in justice and goodness. Must it not be in Christ? Not necessarily in the historic Christ; but it must be in the spirit he breathed, the principles he taught, and the aims he pursued. In the high and essential sense every man has faith in Christ just as far as this spirit, these principles, and these aims become his own, and no farther; or, in other words, to the precise extent that he is like Christ.

And say not that I have omitted from my definition of a religious man love to God. No one destitute of this element can love his brother as he should do. No one can do this without loving God for having made him capable of it. I add that every one's love to God is proved and measured by his love to man.

The little handful of uncompromising Abolitionists are blamed for refusing to vote at the late Election for this, that, or the other party ticket. But there were irreligious men upon each—men whose principles and practices proved their disposition to wield government for the destruction instead of the protection of the people. Men there were upon all these tickets, who would license the dram-shop; that great manufactory of paupers and madmen; that great slaughter-house or bodies and souls, that great source of peril to the persons and property of the sober, as well as of suffering to the families of drunkards; that great multiplier of our taxes, but for which we should pay only shillings to the tax-gatherers where we now pay them dollars, and but for which there would be comparatively little occasion for courts and prisons, and probably none at all for poor-houses. Men there were upon all these tickets who would replunge into the deep pit of slavery the poor trembling ones who have escaped from it; and who would de-

grade and dishearten millions of their countrymen by excluding them from citizenship and the ballot-box.

How, then, could we vote for any one of these tickets? How could we do so, and still honor the Bible view of religion and civil government? What! vote for men who would worse than murder their innocent brothers and sisters by enslaving them? Impossible, without most deeply dishonoring that view. I said worse than murder—for who would not rather have his child murdered than enslaved? What! vote for men who would use the power we give them to punish complexion with civil and political disabilities! Surely, we could not do so without outraging all our convictions of what the Bible teaches of religion and civil government. All the varieties of the human family are equally dear to Him who “hath made of one blood all nations of men;” and if the religion of the Bible is both his and ours, then are they equally dear to us also. The recent refusal of the majority of the voters of this State to restore suffrage to the black man proves that majority to be atheists. The contempt which that refusal pours upon human nature is wholly incompatible with true religion. A man may love himself, and this or that branch of the human family; but unless he love all its branches, he is the guilty enemy of human nature, and of the God in whose image it is made.

Some of these Abolitionists are blamed for entertaining, as did their sainted brother, James G. Birney, so small a hope that the voters of our country will bring slavery to a peaceful end through the ballot-box. Their little faith in these voters is construed into evidence of their want of faith in God. But more properly might little faith in such of these voters as love to cast pro-slavery and dram-shop votes be construed into want of faith in the devil. Our speeches and writings for a quarter of a century show that we look for a speedy termination of American Slavery. But our growing fear, in the light of our growing knowledge of American voters, is, that the termination will be violent instead of peaceful. It will come in some way in God’s providence, and it will come soon. But to say that, because we doubt its coming in the bloodless and desired way, we doubt his providence, and have a reduced faith in himself, is to do us a groundless and a great wrong.

It is very true that our hope of seeing slavery voted to death is small. This is as true as that the facts in the case forbid it to be large. And if I may be allowed to speak for some of these Abolitionists, I will add that not only do they apprehend that a people who receive their religion upon authority, instead of understandingly, will be found inadequate to the task of putting away peaceably a system of slavery so inwoven as is ours with political, ecclesiastical, commercial, social interests, but inadequate also to the maintenance of democratic institutions. The religions of the world being authority-religions, harmonize with monarchies and despotisms. If peoples who are swayed by them call for democratic forms of government, then do they call for what is far above them—for what they are not yet educated to meet the cost of. Were the Italians now to put away their authority-religion, and now to assert their right to judge for themselves as freely of every page in the Bible as of every page in any other book, and as freely of every proceeding in the Church as of every proceeding in any other association, it would not be strange if, fifty years hence, that happily delivered people should look out from the midst of their flourishing democratic institutions upon the ruin of ours.

Some of these Abolitionists hold that the North is *particeps criminis* in American Slavery, and should therefore consent to share with the South in the present loss of emancipation. They hold that here is a case for applying the motto: "Honor among thieves." Now, to charge them, therefore, with recognizing the right of property in man is as unjust as to deduce from their lack of faith in American voters their lack of faith in God. But these Abolitionists would *buy* the slaves! — *all* the slaves! Well, let it pass for *buying*. And, pray, do not their accusers sometimes help *buy* a slave? Oh! yes — but they have never undertaken to buy *all* the slaves! Nevertheless, does not what they themselves do estop them from complaining of the morality of this undertaking? Moreover, would not *all* their accusers consent to be bought out of slavery were they to fall under its heavy yoke? If they would, then let them first become so self-crucifying as to be able to reduce to practice in their own case that sublime morality by which they presume to try and condemn others.

No less is the injustice done to such of these Abolitionists as are charged with consenting to have the governmental action, which shall attend the annexation to each other of nations, or parts of nations, include the sanction and upholding of slavery. With their broad democracy and their immeasurably greater account of the natural rights of people than of the conventional claims of Government, they can not consistently withstand the desire of two peoples (bond and free, male and female included) to cast in their lot together. They can not withstand it, even though the conspirators, who have usurped the name and authority of Civil Government, enact theft, slavery, murder, or whatever else, as the conspirators' terms of the blending. Does it follow, however, from such enactments, that these Abolitionists recognize these conspirators as Civil Government? Not at all. They do, in fact, recognize as Civil Government that only which administers the law of God. Such Governments as do not administer it, and especially the pro-slavery governments of this country, are in their eyes but piracies. Or does it follow that the Abolitionists of whom we are speaking consent to, or are in any wise responsible for, the man-crushing and God-defying terms on which these conspirators condition the blending? Certainly not. No more does it follow that they would have the consociating peoples consent to or be responsible for them.

Moreover, if these Abolitionists believe that the slaves of Cuba and of the United States wisely desire to bring their sad fortunes together, and their desolate hearts together into one nation, or that they would desire it if they knew their true interests, and would do so even if the parties who hold the reins of power should seek to turn to the advantage of slavery such bringing together—then these Abolitionists should not only not withstand the desire, but should promote its realization. They should themselves speak for these “poor, poor dumb mouths,” and should feel not the least responsibility for the unrighteousness which others may succeed in coupling with the longed-for annexation.

Nor less is the injustice of classing with “disunionists” those Abolitionists, who, opposing by all moral and political influences the secession of States from the Union, would nev-

ertheless not have the seceders pursued with armies. Those Abolitionists believe in love rather than in hatred; and hence they would be more disposed to bless than to curse the seceders; to protect them rather than to shed their blood. For my own part, I still feel on this subject as I felt half a dozen years ago, when I said on the floor of Congress: "If they will go, let them go, and we, though loving the Union, and every part of it, and willing to lose no part, will let them go in peace, and follow them with our blessing, and with our warm prayer that they may return to us, and with our firm belief that they will return to us after they shall have spent a few miserable years, or perhaps no more than a few miserable months in their miserable experiment of separating themselves from their brethren. Of course I can not forget that many—alas! that they are so many—would prefer following the seceders with curses and guns. Oh! how slow are men to emerge from the brutehood into which their passions and their false education have sunk them! I say brutehood, for rage and violence and war belong to it, while love and gentleness and peace are the adornments of true manhood."

What will be the spirit of the North toward the seceding States, bids fair to be soon proved. It is even probable that the Slave States will secede—a part now and nearly all the remainder soon. This will not be because of the election of Lincoln. That is at the most an occasion or pretext for secession. Nor will this be because it has long been resolved on. There is something, but not so much, in that. It will be because their "iniquity—is full," and the time for their destruction at hand. During the last few years the South has been busy in leaving nothing to add to her iniquity. I speak not so much of her reöpening the African slave-trade, nor of her increasingly tenacious grasp of her slaves as of her purpose to banish what she can of her long-tortured free colored people, and reönslave the rest. This crowning iniquity ripens her for ruin. It ripens her for secession, which is ruin. Maryland, having refused to be guilty of this crowning iniquity, will, we trust, be saved from the fate of secession. Missouri means to be a Free State, and Delaware is already substantially one. Hence they will not secede.

The South would know herself to be hurrying on to destruction were she not blind to the lessons of history and deaf to the voice of Providence. She ought to know it if but from the fate of the oppressors of Hayti. They were not slaughtered until they undertook to reënslave the free — and then they were.

Divine Providence has its course in the Southern States as well as elsewhere; and there as well as elsewhere, both the wickedness and righteousness of men contribute to shape that course. In the words of a precious Moravian hymn :

“He everywhere hath rule,
And all things serve his might.”

God did not fail to hear the piercing cry sent up a few months ago by the exiles of Arkansas. His tender heart pitied the poor ones driven out about the same time from the State of Louisiana. He witnesses the atrocious cruelties which South-Carolina heaps upon her free colored people, and follows them in their flight from their oppressors. And all this, we may feel assured, goes to “serve his might” and to shape his providence.

I spoke of the secession as ruin. It will be only a present ruin, however. It will result in a glorious renovation. The seceding States will return to us, not to be Slave States again, but to be Free States; not again to oppress the poor, but cordially and practically to acknowledge the equal rights of all; not again to disgrace America, and hinder the spread of Democracy over the earth, but to honor the one and extend the other; not again to be a heavy curse, but to be a rich blessing to mankind.

But we pass on, to speak of another injustice. It is that of denouncing as enemies of the Bible those of us who believe there are a few errors in it, and of denouncing, as guilty of setting their reason above the word of God, those of us who would let their reason inquire what is and what is not the word of God.

There is a child who deeply loves and honors his mother; but he confesses that the few pimples or moles upon her face are blemishes, slight indeed, but still blemishes upon her beauty. Is it to the shame and discredit of his filial piety that he makes

this confession? Even if it is, it does not become such of her children to say so, as disgrace her, and break her heart by their flagrant disobedience, and make no other atonement than their hollow ascription of entire perfection to her.

It is argued that reason, having once decided that the whole Bible, and nothing else, is the word of God, is bound to rest there. This is sound argument. But is it bound to rest there always? By no means. Reason must ever be left free to revise and repeal its own decisions, and to deny to a verse to-day the inspiration it admitted yesterday. When I was young, my reason (if reason it was) accepted the statement that God ordered the Jews to plunge into bloody wars, and to torture innocent women and children. But now it does not, and does not because it has, as I believe, become more enlightened. It now refuses to regard the loving Father as an arbitrary, revengeful, bloody, pagan deity.

Good and wise men (and I admit that both this age and former ages are on their side) call on us to abandon our claim for the ceaseless free play of reason upon the pages of the Bible. So, too, did the ages call on Galileo to abandon his belief that the world moves. But Galileo has come to be justified; and so also will they who, in opposition to the world—both the present and the past world—claim that even the Bible itself does never, at any period of his life, fall without the jurisdiction of any man's reason. There is great astonishment that the Church so dreaded the influence of astronomy upon the Bible; but there will be greater that it so dreaded the influence of reason upon it. The dread in both cases is explained by its foolishly regarding a book instead of Nature as absolute authority, and the Divine inspiration of every page in it as a fact no more to be questioned than the existence of the sun.

We admit that we can not honestly deny that we make our reason final arbiter in all our investigations—even our investigations of the Bible. We dare not hold it in abeyance, nor disclaim its supremacy even there. At all times and in all places we must let it decide what is the word of God. If Dr. Cheever makes it turn supremely and finally upon the Bible whether immortal man can be rightfully enslaved, or, in other words, rightfully reduced to brutehood and merchandise,

we can not go with him in that. We must there diverge from this dear and noble man of God. We can not leave it to the interpretation of any words whether a hog is a hog, a horse a horse, or a man a man. Whatever words may say to the contrary, we must, in all circumstances, treat each according to its nature. So should every thing be treated, and what is its nature should be learned (because there it can be more surely learned) from itself rather than from any, even the best account of itself. The world admits that Shakspeare is a wonderfully deep and accurate reader of human nature. But it admits this because Shakspeare agrees with its own observations of human nature. Does it test man by Shakspeare's knowledge of him? Far more does it test Shakspeare by its own knowledge of man. And so, likewise, instead of making the Bible either the exclusive or the conclusive expounder of man, the Bible reading of him is also to be judged of by our own observations of him.

This leaving it to words whether slavery is right or wrong accounts for the sad fact that the church people South are all pro-slavery, and that a large share of them North are also. Dr. Cheever found the like in his recent travels in Switzerland — the church people in favor of slavery, because they read the Bible to be in favor of it. Lamentable effect, we admit, of their misinterpretation of this precious book! but far more lamentable effect of the ecclesiastical requirement to turn from man to a book in order to learn what he is and what are his rights! Possibly Dr. Cheever himself may yet become pro-slavery. Should he wake up some morning with the conviction that there are words in the Bible on the side of slavery, he would either have to renounce the authority of the Bible, or have to become pro-slavery. I do not doubt that he would renounce it, even though he should see that he would thereby make himself as odious as I, by doing so, have made myself.

Jesus saw that men were enslaved to authority, and that their own experience of truth could alone set them free. He took up men out of their bondage to superstitions, and out of their debasing and blinding submission to authority, and threw them back upon their own consciences and convictions, and demanded that they should judge for themselves, yes, and

of themselves, what is right. Thus to individualize and insulate each man was his first step toward getting each man right.

The question which Jesus puts to the slaveholder is not, "What does the Church or the Bible think of slavery?" but it is: "What think *you* of it—*you yourself*?" "What think you of it in the light of human nature—of that high nature it tramples under foot—whose holy affections it outrages—whose sweet hopes and loves it mocks—whose sublime aspirations it chokes and kills—and of all whose rich and glorious relations to earth and heaven, to time and eternity, it makes no account?" "What think you of it in the light of the golden rule, to do as you would be done by?" "What think you of slavery as a condition for yourself—as a yoke upon your own neck, by however solemn enactments imposed, or however poor and helpless you were at the time of the imposition?" "What think you of it for your children—for even the dullest of them, and for those least able to take care of themselves?" In a word: "What think you of slavery, when you try it by that self-application mode of reasoning which Jesus taught?" Could you pin the slaveholder to such questions; could you prevent his escape from the tribunal of his own conscience, he would soon cease to be a slaveholder. But, unhappily, the Church has taught him how to evade the pressure of your questions and of his conscience. He finds shelter in an authoritative religion, and is relieved of the necessity of self-arraignment.

This self-application mode of reasoning, when faithfully wielded, makes the problem simple and the duties plain. The Presidential candidates in the late Election would send other people's children into slavery. But would they send their own, even if pressed to it by ten thousand Constitutions and ten thousand statutes, and ten thousand judicial decrees, ay, and ten thousand Bibles also? My neighbors voted for them. But would they have done so had it been my neighbors' children, whom these candidates proposed to send into slavery?

The sincere and self-sacrificing John Brown was adjudged worthy of death because he would put weapons into the hands

of slaves wherewith to defend themselves in their flight from slavery. But would not his judges, ay, and the famous Harper's Ferry Committee also, were they in slavery, welcome such a service? Such are my own ethics and education that I had rather live and die in slavery than shed blood to escape from it. But had they?

The work Dr. Cheever has chosen for himself is to persuade the Swiss, the Americans, and the world, that the Bible is against slavery. But far more important, far more hopeful, and far shorter would be his work, were it to convince them that, say what the Bible may, slavery is wrong; and to convince them of it by carrying them straight to man, and demanding their solution of the problem amid the influences shed upon them by that august and godlike presence. It is when pervaded by these influences—the solemn influences of the most holy and glorious of all earthly temples—the temple of man—that we feel how exceedingly poor, compared with its real authority—the authority of God in man—is that which is so falsely claimed for traditions, books, and churches.

Dr. Cheever sees no hope for freedom, if the Bible shall be given to the side of slavery. But I see no hope for the Bible if it shall be proved to be for slavery. Slavery is not to be tried by the Bible, but the Bible by freedom. All this talk that the Bible is the charter of man's rights is nonsense. His nature is that charter; and his rights are the rights of his nature—no more nor less—every book to the contrary notwithstanding. The nature of a monkey determines its rights. The nature of a man his.

Nothing can be more degrading to the high nature God has given us than to argue that its rights stand in a book, and that we need run to it to learn whether we may or may not get drunk, commit theft, murder, or enslave men. No book points out men's crimes so clearly, or protests against them so strongly as their own nature; and if they turn away from the best teacher, under the plea of hearing a better, they will, in the end, be apt to hear neither. There is no safety for us any further than we respond to the utterances of our being. We may, and we should, study that being in the light of the Bible and of all other lights at our command. Nevertheless,

it is that which we are to study. We may, and we should, have respect to the wise judgments which abound both within and without the Bible. Nevertheless, the final and decisive judgment is that which we are ourselves to form. We are never, nor in the least, to doubt our capacity to judge rightly in regard to every thing which enters into the essence of religion—every such thing being entirely plain and simple. Were it not so, Jesus would not have said to the people: “And why judge ye not even of yourselves what is right?”

But it will be long, very long, ere the people are weaned from depending on book-interpreters for their religion, and are brought to study it for themselves in nature. The education of the age has served to enslave men to authority; and an authority-religion is therefore just what their education calls for. They must not presume to go to the plain volume of nature for their religion. But, with blind faith in others, and boundless submission to authority, they must receive for religion what the churches, who quarrel among themselves as to the meanings of a book, tell them is the religion of that book.

I close my discourse abruptly, to the end that the congregation may have the more time for reviewing it. Happy usage this, of having the church and congregation resolve themselves in the afternoon into a conference for reviewing the discourse they have heard in the morning. Not a little of its marked knowledge of the true religion does Peterboro owe to this usage.

Although the mass of the voters at the late Election were for slave-catching and dram-shop candidates; and although they who sternly refused to vote for men in favor of licensing the dram-shop, or for men who know as law any form of piracy, and least of all the superlative piracy of slavery, were but a very little handful, nevertheless we are not to be discouraged. This very little handful, even though it shall never increase, will not fail to exert a growing influence for Freedom, truth, and righteousness. But it may increase rapidly—ay, under the Divine blessing, even triumphantly. Like the “handful of corn on the top of the mountains, the fruit thereof may yet shake like Lebanon.”

ON MIRACLES.

DISCOURSE IN PETERBORO, APRIL 14TH, 1861.

HAVE there ever been miracles? By which I mean, have the laws of Nature ever been suspended? Neither the observations and computations of astronomers nor the explorations of geologists detect such suspension. "All things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." As yet, it holds true that, "While the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease."

Whatever the good that might come of miracles, certain it is that immeasurable evil would also come of them. Men would no longer know what to rely on in either the physical or the moral world—in the character of nature or the character of God. That with God "is no variableness, neither shadow of turning," and that like his Son, who reflects him, he is "the same yesterday and to-day and forever," is taught more largely and surely by the unchanging operations of his laws than elsewhere. What an appalling and withering uncertainty miracles would send throughout the realms of natural science! Quite discouraged would be the geologists and astronomers, and quickly would they abandon their enterprises, should they come to fear change in those operations. Unhappy would be the effect upon the navigator, the farmer, the mechanic, the physician, and indeed upon whom not?

But, you will say, that miracles are too infrequent for such disastrous consequences. You are, with few exceptions, Protestants; and you will say, that the sole object of miracles is the authentication of Christianity. Nay, you will say, that

there have been none for the last eighteen centuries, and that there never will be any more.

Even, however, if miracles are to this end only, they can not be so infrequent as you suppose. The conditions of belief in one age may differ very widely from those in another; and so, also, in one country from those in another. What to the Jews were miracles, might not to the English wear the least semblance of them. So common were they in Judea, that their being miracles was not at all in the way of their being believed. But a great change must be wrought in the English mind before it can be brought so far as even to listen to testimony in behalf of present miracles. Deep-rooted preconceptions are to be removed, and life-long habits of thought to be overcome ere the way will be clear to hear witnesses. Hence, though there may still linger so much superstition and religious prejudice in the English mind as to make it still acquiesce in old Jewish miracles, it remains true that Jewish testimony can not prove them to that mind. What to the Jew of two thousand years ago might have been entirely convincing evidence of a miracle, might to the modern Englishman be but illegitimate and inadmissible evidence. The ancient Jew is no more capable of bringing proof on this subject to the modern Englishman than children are of proving to their parents the truth of children's marvelous stories. If then, the miraculous authentication of Christianity is needed, there should be miracles to this end in England as well as in Judea—miracles within sight of English eyes and within hearing of English ears. Jewish testimony of miracles, however honest the observation of them, and however honest the transmitted record of them, can not suffice to overcome all incredulity outside of Judea.

It follows then, in the light of what has been said, that if miracles are a needed proof of Christianity they must be more frequent than you believe them to be. They must be needed in this age and that, all along down the track of time; in this and that country, all over the world's surface.

Again, God is impartial. The salvation of one people is (all foolish, selfish, sinful Hebrew superstitions to the contrary notwithstanding) as dear to him as that of another. Hence, if he would vouchsafe miracles to one people for the purpose of as-

sureing them that their religion is true, he would vouchsafe them to another people as the means of convincing them that their religion is false. The one would be as needful as the other. The Hindus are in as much need of miracles to persuade them that their religion is false as were the Jews to persuade them that Christianity was true.

Evidently, then, my neighbors, you are bound by fair logic either to give up your faith in all miracles, or to admit that they are so frequent as to forbid reliance upon the unvarying character and operation of the laws of nature.

But you feel that you can not possibly cease to credit the miracles which are historically connected with your religion. Remember, however, that they are no part of it, and that its truth does not make them true. Your faith in them, to be justified, must have a basis quite independent of that of your religious faith. You must neither assume nor infer them to be true. You must have clear and direct proof of them, or you must reject them. Is there enough of such proof to carry conviction to an enlightened and unbiassed mind? I think there is not. Of the numberless educated and good men, whether Protestants or Catholics, who believe in miracles, I do not think there is one who could believe in them, but for their being identified in his apprehensions with his religion. Such identification makes them sacred to him. He feels no need of their being proved to him, and to every disproof of them he is impervious and blind.

We proceed to inquire why it is that, as a general proposition, and indeed in every case save this in which the miracles are associated with the cherished religion, sound and cultivated men refuse their credence to them. It is because their observation and experience of the constancy and certainty of natural laws are too conclusive to be shaken by even the utmost accumulations of human testimony. Never have they seen inconstancy and uncertainty in these laws. But the fallibility of human testimony they have seen every day.

It turns not simply nor even mainly upon the words of the witnesses whether we believe or disbelieve in the alleged events. Much more depends upon the antecedent state and habits of our minds—upon our educated preparation to believe

or disbelieve—than upon the words, or number, or general credibility of the witnesses. I read that a man has died. Why I believe it so unhesitatingly, is chiefly because death is not only a possible and probable, but a very common actual event. News comes that a child is born with two heads and four arms and four legs. We disbelieve it. But when thousands of credible persons assure us that they have seen the prodigy, our disbelief can hold out no longer. It is, however, still more by force of our previous observation, experience, convictions, or, in one word, education, than of these numerous witnesses, that we are enabled to believe. We knew before that some persons were born deficient in members, and some with too many; and hence we were prepared to listen to testimony in behalf of this astonishing and at first incredible phenomenon. But had the news been that an infant was seen to enter the world without a mother, then, and even though millions had testified to their personal and certain knowledge of the event, we should (always provided that our religion did not call for faith in it) have from first to last refused to believe in the event. For there is nothing in our previous knowledge and training to help, but on the contrary, every thing to prevent our believing in it. However entire our faith in the honesty and intelligence of the witnesses, we nevertheless could not believe in it. Nay, we would in such case discredit the report, and impeach the trustworthiness of even our own senses; for while, on the one hand, our eyes, ears, and hands have often deceived us, and we have known the senses of the most wary to be the subjects of illusions, we have, on the other, never known the least faltering in the laws of nature. In other words, we have never known a miracle. A however greatly deformed child is but a *lusus naturee* — not a *natural* impossibility — not a miracle. But a child without a birth—a birth without a mother—that is a *natural* impossibility—that is a miracle.

You admit that there is but one reason for miracles, and this is, that the Christian religion may be thereby authenticated. But is there even this reason? Can there be miracles even to this one end? Religion consists in nothing more nor less than the knowledge and observance of the laws of nature. Hence, to make her laws uncertain is to make her religion uncertain.

To make the laws of nature uncertain, is to deprive mankind of their great and sure religious teacher. Miracles, then, might serve to unsettle and destroy, but not to establish religion; and therefore they will never be among the expedients of the Supreme Wisdom for establishing it.

I persist in my definition of religion. The man who beyond all others treats God and man and all beings according to the nature of each, is religious beyond all others. If human nature in the slave calls not for a contrary treatment, then is the slaveholder right in withholding from him knowledge, wages, wife, child, self; and so far, he is more religious than the abolitionist. If the nature of men requires their frequenting the dram-shop, then keeping a dram-shop shows more religion than being a temperance man. If his nature calls for it, then is the daily beating and bruising of the horse religious. Only fall in with all the claims of nature, and you will then fall in with all the claims of religion.

That miracles are not needed to open men's minds and hearts to religious truth, and that, therefore, none are wrought to this end, is manifest from the fact that they can not serve this end. They can not be believed. It is true that even cultivated men are inconsiderate enough to allow miracles to pass for a part of their religion. But this is believing in the religion rather than in the miracles coupled with it; and miracles are worthless unless this order be inverted, and the religion be believed in because of the belief in them. Moreover, it is appreciation of the truth that can alone serve the purpose claimed for miracles. If this be lacking, no miracle can supply the lack. "If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead." It is the hearing of the truth and not the hearing or seeing of a miracle, which produces conviction of the truth. Our maker has adapted us to the truth. This adaptation he has left us free to honor or despise; and this freedom he will not overrule with miracles. The moral constitution he has given us he will not dishonor by such overruling. Both our glory and his own require him to hold it to its high responsibilities; and therefore the sinking of it from its free choices to the necessities of a machine can never be his policy.

It is said that if miracles do not convince of truth, they are nevertheless useful to call attention to it. But life abounds in events far better adapted to this service than miracles could be. The death of our husband, wife, child; our prostration by sickness; our sudden reduction from riches to poverty — if they have not as much power as miracles to astonish, have nevertheless far more to call attention to religious truth. Not only has God given us a nature fitted to the impressions and sway of truth, but such is the course of his providence, that it need not be disturbed and broken by miracles in order to add to the already sufficient number of awakening and solemnizing occurrences.

By our moral sense and not by miracles we are to decide what is moral truth. What commends itself as such to that sense we are to receive. What does not—and even though it be backed by the most stupendous miracle—we are to reject. Paul bids us abide in our convictions even against the preaching of “an angel from heaven.” A miracle is reduced to a very cheap thing, if we are to acknowledge its value only when and so far as it harmonizes with our previous convictions. Again, does not Paul quite exclude the necessity of miracles in what he says to the Corinthians of the competency of the spiritual mind to know and judge?

I do not forget that the coming of man into the world has been called a miracle, and a change of the laws of nature. But may not such coming have been the result of laws as old as any other of the laws of nature? If Darwin’s theory of “the origin of species by natural selection” should be held to be in its application to man entirely fanciful, nevertheless is it not conceivable that God might in some other way produce man from the original and eternal laws of nature? But the coming of man into the world was so late! Not therefore the less probable is it that he did come from such operation. Moreover, who of us knows that man is a recent inhabitant of earth? Late geological discoveries in France and England of what must have been the work of no less than human hands carry the existence of man very far back of the date given to Adam and Eve.

I need say no more to show that the Christian miracles as

well as the miracles of other religions are neither proved nor capable of being proved. They may not be the coinage of craft and cunning. The love of the marvelous, and the credulity of superstition, may chiefly account for them.

But it is held, that not to believe in miracles is not to believe in the Bible. We believe, however, in other ancient histories, notwithstanding our disbelief of their miracles. Why, then, should our disbelief of the miracles of the Bible be construed into disbelief of the histories of the Bible? Moreover, the peculiar and chief value of the Bible is not only aside from its miracles, but from most of its narratives, and from very many of its pages. Its precious sentiments, its pure and profound philosophy, its sublime moralities, its "commandments exceeding broad," which many of its writers and speakers were inspired to utter with a more impressive and soul-reaching eloquence than belongs to any other inspiration—these are what give its preëminence to the Bible. Nay, these are the Bible; and these are what justify me in still saying as I have been wont to do: "The Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible." The religion of the Bible is the true religion. Men need no other, and they need the whole of it. Far am I from claiming exclusive inspiration for these writers and speakers. The Common Father is impartial. The influences of his Spirit are free to men of all ages and nations. But these speakers and writers got nearer to God, and knew more of him than did others. Not content with striking the streams, they traveled up them to the fountains, and slaked their holy thirst ere yet the divine waters had begun to flow down through human impurities. No other writers and speakers seem to have escaped so far from the sphere of human uncertainties—none to have entered so far into the sphere of divine certainties. No other voices of earth sound so much like voices of heaven.

It is also held, that not to believe in miracles is not to believe in Christ. But why should it be so held? Substantially the same miracles are told of the conception and birth of Plato, who lived hundreds of years before Christ, as are told of the conception and birth of Christ. Nevertheless, our making no account of these marvels in the case of Plato does

not cause us to make no account, nor even any less account, of Plato himself. Miracles are coupled with the names, with the birth, deeds, and death of many ancient philosophers and heroes. But our rejection of the miracles involves not the rejection of the men. And what if we do believe that the original attribution of miracles to Christ was crafty or superstitious, and that, therefore, instead of being sanctioned, it should be set aside? Nevertheless Christ is not thereby set aside. He still remains; and he remains the same great Teacher and Example, and therein the same great Saviour. He still realizes our highest conceptions of God's moral character, and therein is he still "God manifest in the flesh."

Miracles and magic go together. Hence they who believe that they are saved by what Christ has done, rather than by what his spirit — the spirit which filled him both in life and death — has led *them* to do, will naturally cling to miracles. They will feel that to give them up is to give up Christ, and to give up the magic salvation which they expect at his hands. But they who take no interest in the question, whether Christ's mother was born sinful or sinless; and but little interest in the questions how, when, where he was born, and who believe that he saves men from the penalty of no other sins than those which his spirit saves them from committing; and who believe that all they have to do with him is to grow, and bring others to grow, in love and likeness to him — they will as naturally be undisturbed by the conclusion that the miracles connected with his birth, life, and death are mere fictions.

Let me do injustice to none. Tens of thousands believe in the miracles, and also in that view of the atonement which I have disfavored, who not only believe in following Christ, but who set that duty far above all dogmas. The best and the worst men believe in the miracles, the Trinity, and in that view of the atonement. The best and the worst men are orthodox; and the best and the worst men are heterodox. Practical religion only — lived-out goodness only — that alone is the test; that alone puts all the good on one side, and all the bad on the other.

I have glanced at the arguments for believing in miracles. I will now pass on to the great need of their being disbelieved.

Formerly I thought it not very important whether they were believed or disbelieved. But of late years I have reached the conclusion, that scarcely any thing is more important than that they be disbelieved. Book-religion may justly be regarded as the greatest evil in the world. It will, however, last as long as miracles are believed in—they being recorded with it, and regarded as a part of it. Herein, then, is the great need of the rejection of miracles. Nevertheless, who will live long enough to witness the rejection? It is the union with each other of miracles and a book-religion which serves to make each well-nigh invincible. The miracles admitted, and the religion is held to be true; the religion admitted, and the miracles are held to be true.

One of the necessities growing out of a book-religion is a priesthood—that frightful enemy of manhood. The mission of the book-religion priest is to unman himself and his people; to make a book-war upon human nature and all nature; and to displace the real God by a conventional and book-God. His people get their religion at second-hand, and it is what the priesthood have prepared for them. For, if they are allowed to read the sacred book, it is only in the light of priestly interpretations, and with no liberty to depart from priestly conclusions. Its religion is held to be wrapped up in mysteries, which priestly learning is alone adequate to unfold—to be a cabalistic science, which sacerdotal skill can alone decipher. I should have called this popular religion a third-hand one, since no book-religion can rise any higher than a second-hand one—any higher than a record of the religious utterances of nature.

Am I asked whether I am opposed to all priests? I am. What, even to priests of the type of Henry Ward Beecher? There are no priests of that type. Mr. Beecher is not a priest—he is a man. His soul is manly, and his preaching is manly. He is not the servant of the book; the book is his servant. He preaches from current life to current life; from nature to nature; from all nature and the God who fills all nature, to human nature. He does indeed love the Bible; and how could such a man fail to love such a book? He preaches its views of God and man. But he does so because his reason

commends them to him as the richest and truest views of God and man which human hearts have ever conceived or human hands ever recorded. Should he find, as he never will, passages in that book favoring slavery or intemperance, he would in no wise be trammelled by them. He would still go with nature and religion, and against these enemies of both. But Mr. Beecher has speculative views of Christ differing from yours and mine! That may be. Still, as he subscribes with us to Christ's practical religion of doing as we would be done by, we can be very tolerant of such speculative views.

I mentioned Mr. Beecher not to eulogize him, but simply to illustrate an unpriestly preacher. I could find fault even with Mr. Beecher. The great and good Theodore Parker was almost disposed to welcome infirmities, not to say sins, in Washington, on the ground that they served as points and ties of sympathy between him and his fellow-men, and to retain within the sphere of humanity this seemingly superhuman saviour of his country. Mr. Beecher does, now and then, slide down into expediency; and now and then make concessions to a great wrong. I will not deny that he does by this means help keep himself in sympathy with the masses—help retain his hold upon them—and help preserve a wide field in which to wield his rich and exhaustless eloquence. Yet I must believe that God is never honored, nor mankind ever benefited, by any inconsistency, whether in Washington or Beecher, or any one else, with the stern law of absolute rectitude.

It is not to get rid of preaching that we would have the priesthood abolished. Its abolition, which will be simultaneous with that of the book-religion, will make room for multitudes of preachers, such preachers as the world needs, preachers of nature, and reason, and righteousness.

One of the great evils of book-religion is its forbidding progress in religion. Is the book a thousand years old? then is it mighty to hold back the human mind to a period a thousand years ago; and if three thousand, then to a period three thousand years ago. The believers in the Koran, in the Vedas, and in the sacred books of China, are at the present time religiously, and therefore intellectually and otherwise

where they have been for many, many ages. The same is true of the tribes which are bound and imprisoned by traditional religions—the effect of such religions being in this respect the same as that of the written religions. How sadly do the condition and character of the Mohammedans, Hindoos, and Chinese illustrate the cramping and crushing influences of a book-fastened, stereotyped, stationary religion! Happy for Christendom that her sacred book is incomparably better than the sacred books of other parts of the world! For, in spite of the false and narrow interpretations put upon it by the priesthood, there has been great progress in Christendom. Yet how little this progress, compared with what it would have been had the book been held to be but a helper, and not a finality in religion! All the way down to the present time has the priesthood (putting its own meaning upon the book) arrayed it more or less, in one way or another, against nature, reason, science, religion, and progress. At one time it is made to withstand astronomy, and at another geology. At the present time it is made to withstand the efforts to abolish war, intemperance, slavery, and the wrongs which oppress woman. As the authority of the book has always been set by the priesthood above nature, above the teachings of nature both in and out of man, so it is not strange that the book, or rather what has passed for it, has been involved in this incessant fight with nature. All now see the folly of its fight with astronomical and geological nature; and all will yet see the wickedness of its fight with human nature. The doctrine that man was made to wear the yoke of slavery will yet be as universally scouted as the doctrine that the great sun was made to revolve around the little earth.

Book-religion can not subdue the mighty evils of the world. Dr. Cheever interprets the Bible against, and another Doctor interprets it for, slavery. Dr. Nott interprets it against, and another Doctor for, the drinking of intoxicating liquors. When Doctors disagree, the people can not decide—for it requires learning to decide in such a case, and the people are not learned. They are not linguists and critics. Hence they must go this way and that, according not only to the different but also to the changing courses of their learned leaders.

By the way, it is not clear that Dr. Cheever's anti-slavery labors will, on the whole, be useful. They certainly will be, so far as the noble man succeeds in vindicating the precious Bible from pro-slavery aspersions. But they will not be if he shall bring large numbers to consent to let it turn finally on the Bible whether slavery is right or wrong. Dr. Nott speaks and writes for temperance with very great ability. Nevertheless, he will do more harm than good if he shall lead multitudes to make a book the final arbiter on this vital question.

Who battles more effectively for both freedom and temperance than the great American orator, Wendell Phillips? Nevertheless, although he now welcomes the aid of the Bible, he would be found battling against it also, were he to become convinced that it is against freedom and temperance. Go the Bible as it might, he would still go for human nature, and therefore for the God in whose image it is made. Would you have him turn away from the authority of God's plainly-written book to construct an authority out of the controverted pages of a man-written book?

The religion of Nature is alone the true religion. Nature then is what we must study in order to know the true religion. Bacon and Shakspeare, and the Bible, far above all other books, can help us in this study. But not even the Bible is the end. All books, the Bible itself included, are but means to the end. And of the value of these means, each one, the humblest as well as the highest, is to judge for himself. No one of them, and no interpretations nor interpreters of any one of them, are to be tolerated as an authority by even the most ignorant.

Because of our doctrine that reason must sit in judgment upon the Bible we are often charged with placing reason above God. But they are guilty of placing the Bible above God — the human above the divine — who place it above Nature. Sweetly and gloriously as God shines in the inspired pages of the Bible, it is nevertheless nature, and especially man, the masterpiece of nature, that is emphatically and pre-eminently the Shekinah—the divine dwelling-place.

The great need of men is to return to the religion of nature. In other words, they need to become natural. In still other

words, they need to be born again. The doctrine of the new birth, which sacerdotalism and superstition have so mystified, has no other significance and no wider scope than the returning of men to the normal action of their nature. Every one who has returned to his nature from his foolish and guilty desertions of it, is born again. To bring him back to his nature and hold him there; that, and that only, is it for which he needs to be the subject of divine influences.

That the public mind is fast escaping from its bondage to book-religions and the priesthood, is owing, under God, mainly to its enlightenment and elevation by science. The effect—nay, the very office also—of science is to recall men to nature; to acquaint them with her; to regain the recognition of her claims, their love of her treasures, and admiration of her wonders. The astronomer, geologist, chemist, anatomist, the explorers by land and sea, the inventors and discoverers, the mental and moral philosophers—such are the men who, along with the divine inspirations both in and out of the Bible, are now at work, whether wittingly or unwittingly, to build up the religion of nature—God's only religion—on the basis of nature. At break of day, "ghosts troop home to churchyards," and owls and bats disappear. Thus must retreat the superstitions and despotisms which almost ever and almost everywhere have occupied the place belonging to religion. The floods of light which science is pouring out upon the earth, will soon leave no dark corners for book-religions to live in, and cabalistic priests to work and rule in.

"They must for aye consort with black-browed night."

It is because it has a book-religion that our country is now involved in a horrible civil war. The South could never have been incited to her unnatural and atrocious aggressions on the North had not her priesthood first convinced her that the Bible is for slavery. Her war is not merely for her slavery. It is for her religion also. Called for, I admit, the war is by her despotism, pride, avarice, luxury, licentiousness, and intense selfishness. Nevertheless it is also called for by her religious conscience. Thirty or forty years ago she would not have made war for slavery, for then she believed the Bible to be

against slavery. Then she excused instead of justifying it. Then she regarded it as an evil, and but a temporary one. The Bible is so read as to suit customers. It is read this way and that—now for rum and slavery, now against them. But I may be asked if there would not be as great uncertainty of interpretation were Nature and Providence instead of the Bible to become the authority in religion. There would not—for Nature and Providence are necessarily an open book, accessible and intelligible to all. They may be reasoned upon by all, and they will be similarly viewed by all when all are freed from book-religion. But the Bible is held to be above human reason: and he who ventures to shove aside the priestly interpretations of it, and claims the right of his reason to pass upon it, is promptly branded as a despiser of authority and an enemy of God.

Ere closing my discourse, let me say that among the great evils which will be reduced to comparatively little ones when the world shall be delivered from the curse of book-religions, is party. Small occasion will there be for religious sects, or as I might otherwise say, for the strife of words, when questions about the meanings of phrases shall have lost their paramount importance. And when there shall be but little of party in the religious world, there will be less of it out of the religious world. It is religious parties that train men for other parties, and create in them such a habit of party, and such a dependence on it, that they can not live without it! Alas! the power of party to demoralize and destroy its subjects! This power is explained by the fact, that absolute rectitude, even when it is the theoretical, is never the practical standard of party; and by the further fact, that each member of it leans upon it, stands not in his own strength, but in the strength of his party; not in his own character, but in that of his party. His individualism is lost in a crowd; and his own definite responsibilities are merged in those of a party, each member's share of which is quite too vague and intangible to be enforced either by his own conscience or the public tribunal.

In my condemnation of party, I have had no reference to the temporary combinations of men for repealing this wrong law, or enacting that right one; for preventing this or securing

that measure of political economy ; for electing this good candidate, or defeating that bad one. Such combinations may be as justifiable as are those for raising or removing buildings. What I condemn is going into a permanent party ; going into it for life ; going into it for personal advantage, and to supply with party influence the lack of personal influence. What I condemn is going into a party as a matter of course ; going into the Baptist, or Methodist, or Odd Fellow, or Masonic party, because others do ; going into a political or other party, because you weary of the dullness of your family or yourself ; going into it to exchange the quiet enjoyments of individualism for the excitements and frenzies of party spirit. How poor and evanescent the pleasures of party — of clubs ! How rich the harvests of self-cultivation ! How noble the results of self-reliance !

I will detain you no longer. For years our little church has testified against a book-religion as a great and ruinous mistake. This testimony, along with others which we have felt bound to give, has made us very odious. But still more odious shall we be if we deny miracles. And yet must we not deny them if we would do all we can to rid the world of a book-religion, and if we would be faithful to all our convictions ? Life is short. Let us hasten to say what we believe men need to have said, even though we shall be hated for saying it. We can afford to forego the public approbation if but our conscience approve us.

NO HUMAN AUTHORITY IN RELIGION.

DISCOURSE IN PETERBORO, SEPTEMBER 22D, 1861.

Is it necessary that we should recognize as authority the Church, the sacred Book, the sacred tradition—all or any of them? It is held to be, because they teach religion. I admit that they teach it—for they enjoin the principle of just dealing toward God and man. In all of them there are more or less obscurations and contradictions of the principle. But (great honor to the history of man!) they all enjoin it.

Nevertheless, these are not to be recognized as authoritative sources of religious knowledge. Were they indispensable to the understanding of religion, there might be a plausible plea for their authoritativeness. But they are not. Religion, as Jesus explains it, is simply *doing as you would be done by*, or, as Confucius, who lived five or six hundred years before him, phrases it: “*Never to do to others what you do not wish them to do to you.*” The Koran apprehends it when it says: “*One hour of equity is better than seventy years of devotion.*” Religion, being but justice, is a principle native to the human breast. Man need not go away from himself to learn what it is. In other words, religion is natural, and the more natural we are, the more religious we are. It is natural in respect to human nature. It is natural in respect to all nature. For all nature, and this includes all providence, is full of the proofs and inculcations of religion. All things as God made them testify for religion.

Are any offended at my resolving religion into dry justice? Justice without love is, I admit, dry. But doing in all things as we would be done by can not be without love; nay, it can not be without loving another even as ourself. And such love! Who knows it, who has felt it, but he who is born again?—but

he who, by divine influence, is recalled from his desertions of himself, and brought back to his nature and his God.

Religion, then, being so patent, so intelligible, so simple, we are not compelled to take it upon authority. And if not, we must not. For the evil of leaning upon authority is to be avoided wherever it can be. Where we can learn a thing for ourselves, we must do so for the sake of safety, and of the healthful and expanding exercise of our powers. Where we can not, and are obliged to take refuge in authority, we can, of course, do no better than submit to the risk of being deceived, and to the disadvantage of leaving our faculties over-ridden and unused. Two gentlemen propose a voyage. The ignorance of one compels him to take the captain's word that the ship is sound and safe. Far better off is the other, whose knowledge of ships enables him to decide the point for himself.

Were it, however, necessary to take religion upon authority, there is an especial and a strong reason against taking it on the authority of the Church, the book, or the tradition. This reason is found, first, in the fact that they abound in much else than religion; much else that is foreign, and much else that is repugnant to religion. Even the Church of Christendom, although so much better than the Mohammedan and other churches, is nevertheless full of errors. So, too, are her books and traditions, notwithstanding their comparative excellence. And this reason is found, secondly, in the fact that we are required to receive these errors as well as the truths with which they are associated. These errors would be nearly or quite harmless, were they not clothed with authority. But, unhappily, they are held to be under the same stamp of authority as are the truths. As undoubted by us, and as sacred in our regard, must be the story of Jonah and the whale, as the Sermon on the Mount; and the like parallel must be allowed to obtain between the command to slaughter the innocent "little ones of every city," and the command to love God and man. Reverend Doctors and Right Reverend Bishops would be as quickly deposed for rejecting the fish story as the Sermon.

Only a few weeks ago an Episcopal minister told me that I was sinful for opposing slavery, and that the little church with which I am connected would be sinful for receiving into its

membership the slave who had run away from his master, and had, to use the minister's very word, thereby "robbed" his master. He proceeded to tell me that were he a slave he would never consent to accept his freedom until his master had granted it. Why, in the name of common-sense, did this minister talk so? Simply because he believes that every line in the Bible comes from God, and that, therefore, any one line in it is just as obligatory upon his faith and practice as any other line in it. It is scarcely necessary to add that he is among the millions who believe that the Bible is in favor of slavery. Very sad is it to see men holding their reason in abeyance and receiving even what is truth upon the authority of a miracle-sustained or any otherwise outwardly sustained religion. But far more sad is it to see them, as in the case of this minister, gulping down the enormous absurdities which flow along with this religion. And yet it must be so with all who shut themselves up to authority-religion. They must accept the false along with the true, the non-sense as well as the wisdom. Are many beginning to insist on the right of reason to discriminate in such cases? It is only because many are beginning to break away from authority-religion. It is natural to remember in this connection how weighty an argument it is against an authority or book-religion that drunken Noah's belching has been allowed to work so much misery. For the slavery which existed before that set up in our own hemisphere there was a show of right and mercy, since it was, for the most part, a commutation of the capital punishment usually inflicted upon the captives of war. But American slavery rests upon inferiority of race; and the curse belched forth by Noah is the great authority for it. Without this authority Christendom could not have maintained slavery. In this curse the American rebels have found the corner-stone for their Confederacy. Of scores of millions slavery has been the hard lot, simply because half a dozen lines found in one of the sacred books (9th Genesis) are held, as are all parts of such books, to be teachings of God's religion. Costly lines these to those poor millions! Nevertheless the Churches would not give them up in exchange for the richest page in all the writings of Fox or Fenelon, Wesley or Hall, Edwards or Dwight, Channing or Parker, Tyng or Beecher, or any other great and

good man since the days of the Apostles. The proposition to put such a page in the place of that scrap of history entitled "Esther," or in the place of the sensual "Song of Solomon," would horrify them by its blasphemy. For they will have it that the writings which, in a superstitious and ignorant age, were culled from the great heap of Jewish writings, and ultimately collected in a book named the Bible, do alone afford proof of being divinely inspired. Perhaps they do. But whether they do, every man has as full right to decide as had Thomas or John or David, or any one else employed in this culling. A partial and unjust God have we, if inspiration or the right to decide what bears proof of it belongs exclusively to any age or people. Moreover, it is a great mistake to suppose that such a claim, when made in behalf of the Bible, will much longer serve to sustain the appreciation of its merits. It is fast sinking under the claim, and will sink faster unless the arrogant and senseless claim be abandoned. From the time I broke jail and escaped from my ecclesiastical keepers, I have found by experience how it is that they who attain to my freedom see, as they never saw before, the matchless wisdom, beauty, eloquence, and sublimity of the Bible. Until their liberation, inexorable authority required them to bring all parts of the Bible to the same level—to drag down the words of Him who spake as "never man spake" into a repulsive association with passages of folly and falsehood, and to lift up licenses for concubinage and cruel, causeless war into harmony with the best utterances of the noble Paul. But now, under the free range of reason, and of its approvals and disapprovals, and no longer compelled to strike this one level, to mix and to modify, to qualify this brightness, or force light into that darkness; they are at liberty to separate the wheat from the chaff, the gold from the dross, and to magnify the one without the necessity of making allowance or deduction for the other, and to discard the one without retaining it at the expense of the other. Now they can gaze upon its celestial beauties without feeling obliged to blot them. Now they can listen to its unequalled communications without being offended by what is so incongruously mingled with them.

Another special and strong reason why, were it necessary to take religion on authority, it should not be taken on such

authority as is now recognized, is, that the churches, with their books and traditions, are bound to the ignorant and superstitious past. Disgraceful and pernicious is it to waive reason and succumb to even an intelligent authority. But shameless and ruinous is it for an enlightened age to consent to be bound by the authority of a dark one. Surely if an authoritative sacred book is proper, it should be made up, as far as can well be, of the advanced wisdom of the age. Nevertheless, Hindoos, Chinese, Jews, and Christians are still burrowing among books thousands of years old, turning their backs upon the sunshine of reason, and seeking for knowledge among the dusty relics of the most ignorant and superstitious times. Again, if such a book is proper, it should be made especially for the people whom it is to sway. Other parts of the world have been wiser in this respect than Europe and America. The Hindoos made their own sacred books. So did the Egyptians and Chinese theirs; making them up, it is true, to a large extent from the books of the Hindoos. But as a whole they were adapted to the character and wants of the people for whom they were made. The Greeks and Romans, more liberal than others in the matter of religion, not only welcomed religious ideas from all quarters, and kept room in their Pantheons for the gods of all nations; but more wise also, they blended their religion with all their affairs. Hence they had no technically sacred books. Had there been these to tie them down they would never have risen to the highest of all the ancient types of civilization. Their superiority is accounted for by nothing so much as by their religious liberality. Nor have Europe and America any sacred books of their own—those they have being borrowed from Asia. That in their childhood they accepted an Asiatic authoritative religious guidance is not strange. But that now in their maturity, and when they so far surpass the wisdom of either ancient or modern Asia, they continue to submit to it, is very strange. How significant of the blinding and binding power of an authority-religion is the fact that enlightened Europe and enlightened America still cling to the books which poor, benighted, bigoted Judea furnished them! One of the curious consequences of this tenacity is that the great mass of professing Christians (and especially of the most devout) know more

to-day of the ancient history of the Jews than of the modern history of the foremost of the present nations. To study that eccentric, conceited, self-righteous people is held to be a pious duty—and therefore immeasurably more important than the study of the characteristics and course of France or England, or any other nation whose enlightenment and liberality are lifting up human nature, and honoring it and its Author. And it is not only to the Jewish nation that we go back for our sacred books. In adopting these, we do in effect go much farther back in the ever-darkening way toward the infancy of the human family. For, in the first place, not a very small part of the Bible was made up from the sacred books of Egypt; and, in the second place, the Vedas or sacred books of Hindostan were more or less incorporated with those of Egypt, having been carried there by emigrants at an early day. As proof that in the Egyptian fountain of which the Jews drank so freely were Hindostance waters also, Jews and Hindoos are agreed that God is One; that images of him may not be made, and that his name may not be spoken. Each, too, believes that it is the chosen people of God, and the sole trustee of his laws. With both the office of the priesthood is overshadowing. Both believe creation to be the product of six successive periods, and that man and woman came last. Noah's connection with the deluge is substantially that of Menu's. What is said in the Bible of the slaughter of the male infants, was said many ages before in the Hindoo books—Cansa, instead of Herod, being one name, and Chrishna, instead of Christ, being another. Again, Chrishna, like Christ, was made more happy by penitent persons than by the most rigid worshipers. The doctrine of the Trinity is held by the Hindoos, and most Christians believe that it is to be found in the Bible also. The Hindoos, as well as the Jews, believe in a blood-atonement, and both lay the sins of the people on the head of an animal and turn it loose that it may carry them away.

I close under this head with the remark that the parallel between these people does not extend to their spirit. The Hindoos are far the more tolerant. They require sincerity rather than uniformity. They hold that "Heaven is a palace of many doors, and each one may enter his own way." In point is the

following quotation, which Mrs. Child makes from the writings of the Bramins: "The Supreme Being is the friend of the Hindoo, the intimate of the Mohammedan, the companion of the Christian, and the confident of the Jew." Far back and very dark as was the age in which the Hindoo books were written, nevertheless the religion which is streaked with the sweet light of such charity can not be the darkest of all religions.

The Egyptian books have perished, and what we know of them is what is preserved in other writings. Egypt also believed in one God, and yet in the Trinity. She also believed in immortality. She also abhorred the flesh of swine. She also practiced circumcision — and that, too, long before she knew the Jews. The Egyptian priests were as distinguished and prerogated a class as the Jewish priests, and among the ruins of Thebes are representations of the Ark, and the branched candlesticks, and the cherubim, and the loaves of bread. If the Egyptians got these from the Jews they must have got them more than three thousand years ago.

I said how an authoritative sacred book, if there must be one, should be made up. I did not mean that it must be of modern utterances exclusively. Those of Jesus, the preëminent Son of God should be first in it. Much else of the Bible and of other sacred books should be in it. But it should contain the richest specimens of modern as well as of ancient inspiration. It should, in a word, be compiled on the principle of the freest eclecticism. Nevertheless, I would have no such book; its authoritativeness would be an evil very far overbalancing all its possible good.

But I pass on from denying the authority of the Church, the book, the tradition, to deny that religion is to be taken on *any* authority. Whoever so takes his religion, and however good a religion it may be, is like to be more harmed than helped by it.

Blinding regard for authority, indisposition to change and opposition to progress, will more or less characterize him in all his relations and all his life. Why is it that you can count upon your fingers all the Episcopal and Roman Catholic priests who have identified themselves with the cause of immediate and unconditional emancipation? It is mainly because they are so enslaved to authority as to venerate it wherever they meet it. They bow to the slaveholder because he is invested

with authority. They spare rum-selling and rum-drinking out of respect to the authority of usage. It is solely in virtue of authority that they exercise their office. To put an end to authority in religion is to unfrock her priests. The influence of such priests would have kept down the human family to its low level of four or five centuries ago. I am not saying that they are bad men. Many of them are excellent men. I am only saying that they are falsely educated, and are the pitiable victims of authority-religion. Quite different is it with ministers of the Congregational, Baptist, and other denominations. Upon them the shackles of ecclesiastical authority have become comparatively loose. Moreover, many of them are fast coming to dare to let reason instead of authority pass upon the pages of the Bible. Such ministers are in the transition state between the religion of authority and the religion of reason. But while in the rapid dissolution of Protestantism, they are passing on to the reign and liberty of reason, not a few Protestant ministers are resigning themselves more entirely to the sway of authority, and approaching their ultimate slavery and repose on the bosom of the Roman Church.

Will the world ever escape from the religion of dogmas and authority and be blessed with the religion of reason and human nature? It will. But I become more and more convinced that the change is distant. Authority is the mightiest enemy of reason and truth, of God and man. This is so, if only in the light of the fact that it serves to spoil the temper, and make it inaccessible to argument. Did you ever know a man who taught school a dozen years without becoming a conceited and impatient dogmatist? Rarely. A Judge, unless he have an unusually good temper, will not fail to harm it by the exercise of authority. Take our orthodox neighbors; they are pleasant on other subjects, but they will not argue with you on religion. They disdain it; naught but apologies will they condescend to hear from you. Inflated and arrogant by having authority on their side, their ears are shut to reason, and they look down with contempt on those who have nothing better than reason to offer against authority. They treat us in much the spirit with which the young lad is treated who presumes to inquire into the reasons of his father's command. Promptly and effec-

tually is he informed that it is a case settled by authority, and calling, therefore, not for inquiry, but submission. The orthodox hold that authority has settled the case between them and us. For nearly twenty years our little "Church of Peterboro" has been saying to them, "Come, let us reason together," but religion, they will have it, is a thing not for reason to speak upon, but for authority to decide upon. Protestants, as well as Catholics, insist that they have, on the side of their faith, antiquity, universality, unity. We will admit that they have. Nevertheless all this proved vain against the arguments of Galileo and his fellow-astronomers, and against the arguments of the geologists also; and all this should be reckoned as vain against the inherent and utter incredibility of miracles, and against the innumerable absurdities in the Catholic and Protestant faith. Antiquity, universality, unity—all these put together do not furnish conclusive proof of the truth of the system which can plead them. It will no longer do for the friends of the Bible to say that the Bible is true because so many ages have trusted in it, and to insist therefore that time has turned it into authority. They must allow that it shall be tested by human reason, and that each of its pages shall be held to be true or false, according as they shall be approved or disapproved of human reason.

Many philosophers assert that Christianity is incapable of proof. But they confound Christianity, which is a very simple, practical, intelligible thing, with one or other of the complex systems of theology. I admit that neither the big bundle of superstitions and mysteries labeled "Romanism," nor the scarcely less one labeled "Protestantism," can be proved to be woven out of truth. Nevertheless, Christianity can be proved to be truth, because fair dealing toward our fellow-men and our Maker is truth, and because such dealing is Christ's explanation of religion, and such explanation is all there is of Christianity. A very injurious mistake is it that Christ set up a new religion. He did but explain the one only religion—the unchangeable and everlasting religion—the religion which he showed rather than explained, its simplicity being more self-evident than susceptible of explanation. Millions of Roman Catholics and Protestants have experienced in their honest hearts the power, and

brought forth in their beautiful lives the fruits of religion. But they were mistaken in believing that Christ taught that either Roman Catholicism or Protestantism is religion. His mission was to eliminate religion of all such and kindred rubbish, and so to simplify it that all persons, even "babes," might understand it. He did not tell the crowds which waited on his ministry to go to a priesthood or to a theological seminary to learn what is religion; but appealing to each man's moral sense, he asks: "And why judge ye not of yourselves what is right?" *To do as you would be done by* he held to be the whole of religion—and how you would be done by is what no man is under the necessity of going to another to learn, but what every man can learn of himself. Every man's self-love can teach him that. Jesus taught the religion of human nature in opposition to all conventionalisms. *Come back to your nature!* is his sole requirement of all who have strayed away from it. The same spirit which enabled him so to abide in and honor his nature, as to make it, in respect to its moral character, even one with his Father's nature, he would breathe into all our hearts to help us return from our foolish and guilty wanderings. Without that spirit—in other words, without being "born again"—we shall never return. With it we shall. "Looking unto Jesus," the highest example of that spirit's power and the highest ideal of the Father's moral nature, is the great means for getting back to our own beautiful but madly deserted nature.

In connection with my denial that the failure to prove Protestantism and Catholicism is the failure to prove Christianity, let me deny that to reject this or that part of the Bible is to reject religion. Religion, if not quite a self-evident truth, is so near it as to be properly called it. But there is much in the Bible which can not be proved. Its moral character, meaning that of its great principles and sentiments, speaks for itself and commends itself. But nearly all else in it is destitute not only of conclusive, but even of considerable proof. The wars of the Bible are probably as inaccurately described as the wars of other as old books, and its miracles are doubtless as groundless imaginations or sheer fictions, as are the miracles of other books of those ancient dates, when the empire of superstition was universal, and the popular appetite for marvels so clamorous.

I said that the world will be slow to give up the religion of authority for that of reason. Submission to the religion of authority is the strongest of all the habits that bind us; and what is most lamentable in the case of an evil habit is the extreme difficulty of throwing it off. How extreme is now manifested in our unhappy country. We are living in the midst of events the most portentous the world has ever witnessed. The hour has come when the very existence of this great nation is threatened; and when we see, as we never saw before, the measureless evil of this well-nigh universal enslavement to authority. When the present war burst out, it found the North fast bound in habits of deference to slavery and worship of the Constitution—habits to which alone it will be owing if the North is conquered. Nothing had done so much to intensify these habits as the ceaseless cunning cry of the slaveholders for the Constitution, and their ceaseless cunning lie that it was made especially for the protection and advantage of slavery. All our patriotism was summoned in behalf of the Constitution, and all our love of the Constitution was appealed to in behalf of slavery. We were reckoned no patriot, and stood little chance for office, if we did not worship the Constitution; and the way of all ways to prove the sincerity of this worship was to worship slavery. To take advantage of this weakness of the North has been the ruling policy of the South for a whole generation. Emphatically has it been the artful and effective policy of the rebels ever since they began the war. While they were firing at our ships and forts, and plundering us of our property, they did not forget to remind us that *our* part of the work was to observe the Constitution—ay, and to observe it very scrupulously. In the late session of Congress, while the loyal members were engaged upon plans for meeting Southern force with Northern force, the impudent and hypocritical members, who were in the interest of the rebels, and despised the Constitution, were pouring forth their lamentations over the unconstitutionality of these plans. Nothing is so effectual to interest us in sparing and promoting slavery as this parade of affection for the Constitution which we idolize, and this assumption that slavery is the Constitutional darling. This taking men in the line of their weakness is tactics of a very effective kind. Justin, an old Latin historian,

says that the Scythians could not subdue their revolted slaves until they went at them with whips instead of swords. It was the habit of the slaves to yield to whips; and whips, with the help of this habit, were therefore mightier upon them than swords. Now, President Lincoln would be as brave as a lion in the presence of the biggest gun in the whole Southern army, but only remind him of his Constitutional obligations to slavery—in other words, only take him where habit has already taken and conquered him—and he becomes as weak as a Scythian slave. However brave and strong he is elsewhere, nevertheless in the line of his weakness he is nothing but weakness. And yet how can he help it? He should not be judged harshly. Like many an honest man he finds it hard to go against his habits. There was one rebel against whom even king David could not fight. He could not so far suspend the habit of his heart. Over this rebel it was that his weakness exclaimed: "Would God I had died for thee!" I do not believe that the President will carry his lamentation so far over slavery when that rebel is dead. Nevertheless, when I see him periling his country for the sake of this most accursed rebel, albeit it is, as he views it, for the sake of saving the Constitution, I feel like saying to him, as did Joab to David: "Thou lovest thine enemies, and hatest thy friends." Enemies indeed are they!—not slavery only, but in effect the Constitution also; for by means of the artfulness of the foe and of our own weakness, untimely and excessive care for the Constitution has become the greatest danger of the country. When I see commander after commander sending men into slavery, and hear no rebuke of it from the President, I confess that I am ready to exclaim: "Thou lovest thine enemies and hatest thy friends." These commanders trample not upon humanity only, but upon the Constitution also. But the President, educated to look upon the Constitution as the servant of slavery, is alarmed for it by nothing that is pro-slavery, but by that only which is anti-slavery. Is it said that these commanders are not bound to respect the Constitution at all times? I admit that they are not. Nevertheless they are never to act irrespective of it save for the one purpose of military advantage. But how there can be such advantage in declining the help of men and turning them into

enemies I do not perceive. To every one guilty of such folly and madness do the words apply: "Thou lovest thine enemies and hatest thy friends." Less than three weeks ago a black man reached our camp on the Indiana side of the Ohio in such distressful and affecting circumstances as would have moved men of heart to bathe him in tears of pity and love, but with a malignity and fiendishness more unnatural and gratuitous than ever before heard of, he was seized and sent South, to be the slave of a rebel officer. The President has no censure for the outrage. Probably he construes it into a happy instance of devotion to the Constitution; but if he does, then again can it be said to him: "Thou lovest thine enemies and hatest thy friends." Such crimes as I have here adverted to are what often fills me with fear that my country is lost; and that the best men and women in it, toil and pray they ever so much for it, "shall but deliver their own souls." My fear is not of the rebels. It springs from the fact that God fights against us, and that He will not cease until we have ceased to fight against his poor. We are stronger than the rebels, but God is stronger than we.

Of all that has occurred to inspire me with the apprehension that the President's habit of worshiping the Constitution and slavery will never be broken, and that our country may therefore perish, his recent treatment of General Fremont is chief. The proclamation put forth by that brave and judicious man, had awakened, all over the North, the hope that the policy of saving the Constitution and slavery at the hazard of losing the country, was at last entirely abandoned. But the President has laid his hand upon the proclamation and blasted all the hope it had awakened. Here again he has invited the remonstrance: "Thou lovest thine enemies and hatest thy friends." Let me say of the proclamation, that if it is wrong, it is so solely because the exigencies of war did not call for it. To say, as the President does, that it is wrong because it does not correspond with a certain law of Congress, is simply ridiculous—disgraceful to himself and to the country which has called him into his high office. Amid such exigencies commanders are not to look to Congress for law. They "are a law unto themselves." Least of all are they to look to such a poor,

cowardly, contemptible, absurd law as is this, which the President thrusts in the face of Fremont, and bids him obey. The President was reluctant to sign this law because it bore so hard upon the rebels, whereas he should have refused to sign it because it bore no harder. What a law was this to enact when the enemy was at our gates!—a law providing that we might take a very little of the enemy's property, and leaving the whole balance to be used by him for prosecuting the war against us! What is more clear than that both Congress and the President are still under the spell of slavery, and still bound up in their educated servility to it, and still far from being entirely in earnest in the work of saving their country! I sometimes am tempted to wish that I were not an Abolitionist—that so I might be heard—for yet awhile an Abolitionist can not, must not be heard. My soul is sick of the shams of this war. My indignation is impatient to break forth in the presence of popular assemblies. But on the whole I am content to be an Abolitionist, and to belong to that class which, say what you will against it, will never furnish an inmate for Fort Lafayette, nor for any other prison for traitors. No, never one of this class will be so much as suspected of sympathy with the rebels. I do not forget that the Abolitionists are esteemed to be fools; but give me earnest folly in preference to heartless wisdom.

One reason why Abolitionists are, as Abolitionists, saying so little is, that until the country is up to the low point of saving itself, it is vain to ask it to save the slave. When a man is drunk we do not speak to him of Christianity; we wait until he gets sober. When he is insane we postpone speaking to him of what sanity alone can comprehend. Until our country shall have so far come to herself as to be willing to defend herself by every weapon within her reach, and to reduce the power of her enemy in every possible way, she will be quite too low to be reached by Abolition truth. That truth will be to her but as "pearls before swine." We will talk to no man for the slave who is himself so enslaved to his prejudices, or so tender of the guilty interests of his foe as to refuse to be saved at the expense of offending those prejudices or of damaging those interests. Our first work with that man is to cure him of his idiocy or insanity.

The course for the President to pursue toward General Fremont was a plain one. 1. If he had confidence in the General's judgment he should have left him to its free exercise, instead of exciting doubts of its soundness, and thereby impairing his prestige and influence. A schoolmaster correcting the written page of his pupil illustrates the attitude to which the President has degraded Fremont in the eyes of the country and its enemy. No thanks to the President if either in council or battle Fremont shall still be able to have himself respected as every commander needs be respected. 2. If the President were so conceited as to believe that he, sitting in Washington, knew more of the wants of Missouri than did Fremont, who was acting in Missouri, then he should have recalled him and supplied his place with one in whose wisdom he had more confidence. But I have no doubt that all the differences in this case between the President and Fremont are resolvable into the single difference that while the one does, like a wise man, hold to the commander's absolute right, in certain circumstances, to dispose, at his mere discretion, of any or all the property of the foe, the other, sadly perverted by his pro-slavery training—if not, indeed, ruinously so both for himself and country—still persists in qualifying this right. It is for the country to decide between them. If it goes with Fremont at this point it is saved, but if with the President it is lost. It is idle to deny that this is the real difference, and that the cause of it on the part of the President is regard for slaveholding interests. If he was so slow to consent that even Congress should provide for the confiscation of even so small a part of the possessions of the rebels, how strongly must he have been opposed to sweeping them all away—and that, too, by a so much humbler authority? Again, if the President must take exception to the proclamation, why was it not to that part which orders the sure and summary shooting? Simply because that is not the part which disturbs his long and deeply-cherished sense of the sacredness of slave property. His concern is for such property—not for life. The President seizes citizens even in the free States, and imprisons them without publicly preferring any charges against them. He suspends the *habeas corpus* even where martial law is not declared. All this he does without caring to have any cover of law for it; and

in all this I admit that he is right, emphatically right. But slavery he holds is too sacred to be touched but in the name of law! Nay, he can hardly be brought to sign a law for touching it, even very tenderly! For God's sake, and man's sake, do I say—out with this pro-slavery education!

I said that the country is the umpire between the President and Fremont. It has already shown itself to be on the side of Fremont. Such as the New-York State Democratic Committee praise the President; and in having the glory of such he verily has his reward. I see with amazement and sorrow that Mr. Holt, of Kentucky, is on the side of the President. Knowing his fine talents and his declarations in favor of "no compromise" with the rebels, I should once have been glad to see him in the Cabinet. But I beg to know what is compromising with them if exempting a part of their property from our grasp is not. Nay, I deny (and, earth over, the court of common-sense will sustain my denial) that the President and Mr. Holt are to be regarded as favoring the most earnest prosecution of this war, so long as they will leave to the foe the property he needs for furnishing himself food, clothing, or other means of subsistence, be this property plows, horses, or any thing else which he claims and uses as property. That Mr. Holt's soul is not yet wrought up into such prosecution of the war is manifest from his calling the disposal of the slaves of the rebels a "delicate and perplexing question." I trusted that he had by this time got very far beyond that mile-stone—very far beyond feeling delicacy or perplexity in depriving the rebels of any of their property or power. I trusted, in a word, that he was by this time for war, without any qualifications or reservations.

Mr. Holt illustrates in himself the mistake of hoping that men, brought up under the befogging and befooling influences of slavery, can ever be good for any thing as statesmen or lawyers on questions connected with slavery. Mr. Holt does not admit that the slaves, which our Government takes from the rebels, do thereby become necessarily free. On the contrary he manifestly believes that it will be for "the Courts of the United States or subsequent legislation" to decide whether they are free, or whether they have but shifted owners. Such is his view of the Constitution, that Government can become a great

slave-owner under it—having millions of slaves to hire out or to sell!

The bare statement of Mr. Holt's position is enough to show its absurdity. Not only is it true (and this Mr. Holt will himself admit) that the change which the President's fingers (not Fremont's unsoiled fingers) put into the proclamation, has no retroactive power, and that, therefore, the slaves whom he freed are forever free; but it is also true that the slaves who, under the changed proclamation or under the law of Congress referred to, shall pass into the hands of Government, will also be forever free—at the most, men being slaves under State law—never after they have passed under Federal law; for if it is held that it is the office of Federal law to enforce State law in certain circumstances against slaves, nevertheless it is not held that Federal law extends to the making of slaves. Being but auxiliary to the State law, the Federal law can no longer have to do with the case after the State law has forever ceased to operate in it. In other words, the Federal law has no independent or original action in the case. In still other words, when the slave has escaped from the clutches of the State law he has escaped from the clutches of slavery. But it may be said that our own State did in the Revolutionary war continue to hold in slavery the slaves whom it took from the rebels. It did—though it soon acknowledged their manhood. But the conclusive answer is—that in that case the slaves did not pass, as in this case, under one law from another; they remained under the same law; they changed owners without changing laws.

And Mr. Holt says that General Fremont's proclamation "violates the law of Congress." But just as well might he say that it violates a law of the British Parliament; for, in deciding what the exigencies of war called for at his hands, General Fremont was no more to be guided by a law of Congress than by a law of Parliament. Those exigencies and his power to meet them belonged to a sphere where the civil law was silent. But it is hardly fair to single out Mr. Holt for censure. He is only chiming in with the Administration policy of tying up the war power with Constitutions, statutes, and red tape. What a laughing-stock throughout the world does this war make of American wisdom! It is only, however, from what slavery

has done to us that our wisdom is at so great a discount. In other words, it is slavery only that has made us fools. Take any other people and compel them to sustain slavery and to be mixed up with it, and they will be as great fools as we are. By nature we are as bright as others; and, indeed, we are still bright in all those things where slavery does not control and confuse us.

And we have become as sensitive and thin-skinned as foolish. We wince under the letters which a correspondent of the *London Times* writes about us. Even our Secretary of State, though he would not have them hung for treason, intimates that such writers "pervert our hospitality." For my part I have regarded these letters, as well as those of the same writer on the South, as no less fair than able. Both North and South should thank him for them. This writer, and all other writres on the war, are at liberty not only to ridicule and denounce the North for protracting the war, but they are to be excused even if they curse her for it. For an enormous crime against God and man is she guilty of in letting this war run on to the needless slaughter of tens of thousands and the needless expenditure of hundreds of millions, when, but for this squeamishness against using certain means, it would have been ended ere this time. Should a part of the counties of England revolt, and should the Government show, like ours, more concern to save a particular interest of the rebels than to save the country, Americans would write quite as sarcastically and severely of England as do Englishmen of America.

" Oh! wad some power the giftie gie us,
To see oursels as ithers see us,
It wad frae monie a blunder free us,
And foolish notion."

∕ The next best thing to this self-discernment is to learn from others how we look. It should be very advantageous to this nation to learn how in the eyes of the world looks the nation that, for the first time in the history of wars, is too dainty to be saved in the vulgar way of crippling your enemy however you can. I once heard of an aristocratic gentleman who, being convicted of his sins, and the peril of his soul, was willing to seek salvation upon his knees, provided only that it might be in a

carpeted room. The selectness of this gentleman well illustrates that of our country. Saving yourself anyhow is no less offensive to the fastidious taste of a negro-despising nation than it is to the refined habits of an aristocratic sinner; and not less wide does hell yawn for such a foolish nation than for such a foolish individual.

One thing that foreigners are now seeing, and that even we, notwithstanding our blinding self-esteem, can hardly fail to see, is that although the democratic education is incomparably the best one for times of peace, it is not so certainly the best one for every emergency and requirement of war. Circumstances there have been and will be in the present war in which the commander must forget Constitution, statute, and public opinion, and do what he will as freely and fully as the veriest despot. Nevertheless, candor obliges me to confess that it is not yet abundantly proved that either our people or our rulers, civil or military, are prepared to fall in with the calls of such circumstances, so trained are they all to boundless respect for law and opinion, and to boundless dread of whatever disregards either.

I do not deny that foreigners are looking forward to the possible necessity of the recognition of the Southern Confederacy by the nations of the earth. And why should they not be? The world is not bound to bear for a long time the great disturbance by this war of her industrial and commercial interests. Moreover, she is bound to shorten this time if she finds us refusing to put forth every effort to shorten it. Again, should we persist in our abominable war upon the blacks, and should the South, in order to gain favor at home and abroad, be pressed into the policy of EMANCIPATION, the nations ought not to defer for a single day the recognition of the Southern nation—ay, and to hold it in higher esteem than the Northern one. The continued madness of our rulers and our press leads me to anticipate as a far more than possible event this honor of the South and this disgrace of the North. I add that, Northern and strongly Northern as I am, nevertheless, the South, giving up injustice, would be dearer to me than the North continuing in it. I would honor justice, though at the expense of patriotism.

A word just here concerning the great popular error of con-

founding the Constitution of the country with the nature of her Government. People seem to think that an American can not be in favor of democratic government unless he is constantly boiling over with concern for the Constitution. But let me say, who, from having stood up so long for every line and letter of it, can afford to say it, that the Constitution is not the Government, but only the way in which the Government expresses itself. Our Government is in its large sense that grand democratic principle which lies deep down in the heart of our people, and which will not be given up for any other kind of government. If need be for the salvation of the country, let the Constitution be thrown to the winds. To that end the North may trample it as deep under foot as the South has done. The democratic principle, which our people cherish, will reproduce Constitutions as often as there may be occasion for them. It is, I repeat it, the Government, and the Constitution is but the way in which, for the time being, the principle operates. The principle will, I trust, be eternal—ay, and in the end, universal also; but the Constitutions which are made to carry it out may be changed from generation to generation. People are foolish in saying that their country will be gone when the Constitution is gone. I own that I shall have no country left, and shall wish none left, when her chosen and cherished principle of Government shall have been crushed out of her. But that PRINCIPLE can survive a thousand Constitutions; and as long as it lives and reigns, or but promises to reign, in my country, so long I shall have a country. Our present war is a struggle between the friends and foes of that principle—the friends and foes of democracy. Its friends will prevail if they shall come to be entirely in earnest, but not otherwise. They are not in earnest who have time to talk and hearts to tremble for the Constitution. And they are not in earnest who, like the late State Democratic Convention in Syracuse, or like numerous politicians all over the North, can, at such a time as this, amuse themselves with getting up, or with threats of getting up, issues with the Republicans and with the Abolitionists. They and they only are in earnest who, until their country is safe, go *for* nothing but her, and *against* nothing but her enemies.

Let me say, ere passing from the political part of my discourse, that while some will argue, from the recent disasters in his district, Fremont's military incompetence, others will argue, and far more wisely, the necessity of his stringent measures among such mighty hordes of rebels, and the great mistake of the President in relaxing them.

You will pardon me for consuming so much of your time with my illustration of the extreme difficulty of getting rid of an evil habit—the topic being so important. You will pardon me, too, for having coupled other things with the illustration—those other things so deeply concerning the cause of our country. I return from my digression to repeat that the world will be slow to cease from its submission to the religion of authority. But until it does, how slow must be the progress of moral truth? All over the earth are good men who long to deliver it from the reign of ignorance, crime, and vice, and to lift up their fellows to higher and still higher planes of life. But, alas! good Hindoos can work to this end only through the Shaster and the Veda; good Persians only through the Zend-Avesta; good Mohammedans only through the Koran; and good Christians only through the Bible! How circuitous their routes! and how clogged the travelers at every step! Such a noble man as Cheever or Beecher has to make two issues with his hearers before he can get the given proposition in contact with their understandings: 1st. *The Bible is truth.* 2d. *It contains the proposition.* But how different the process of the Great Teacher! Passing by all books, institutions, and authorities, he went straight to the man, insisting that the man was himself capable of judging “what is right;” and therefore that he must for himself, and not another for him, decide the proposition. And what an unnatural and false religion that must be which every man can not understand for himself! Surely God never gave it—for, as we have already said, “babes” can understand his religion. It is by just this Christ process that such men as Garrison and Phillips have been able to sink their great but unpopular truths into tens of thousands of hearts. They have dragged men out from their skulking-places behind this and that authority, and compelled them, in the use of their own reason, enlightened by whatever book or no book, and above all by the Holy Spirit, to decide for themselves what is truth!

I will detain you no longer. This religion which I have set before you—this religion of reason and of Jesus—this simple religion of doing as you would be done by—is the religion for which the whole world is perishing. How quickly it would save our poor, ruin-threatened country! for how quickly it would “let the oppressed go free, and break every yoke!” This is the religion which I ask you to help establish in all the earth. This and this alone is what will scatter the shams and superstitions which stand in the way of it, which darken and degrade the soul of man, and prevent the development of his godlike nature. Come then to our help, and leave not that to be done by your children and children’s children which it is a shame for you not to do yourselves.

In commending this religion to you, I say not that it will increase your popularity and patronage. It may take away from you all public favor and many of your customers, and blast your every hope of political preferment. It may “cast out your name as evil,” and sink you in very deep poverty, but the self-respect with which it will inspire you, and the increased peace it will give to you, will far more than compensate for all the outward losses it can occasion you. His loving and living this religion cost the Saviour his earthly life. Your loving and living it may cost yours. But as he gained a “nobler life” by losing this, so may you. “He that loseth his life shall find it.”

DISCOURSE IN BOSTON

JUNE 15, 1862.

I LOVE this world—not only its lands which are near, but those which are far off—not only its waters which I have seen, but those which I have not seen. I love its white men, and also its red and black men. To me the world is full of attractions and endearments. Moreover, I am unconscious of enmity or prejudice against nation or individual. Not strange, is it, then, that I should be reluctant to leave the world. Nevertheless, I am more reluctant to leave it because of what is hateful than of what is lovely in it. I would linger in it longer, and yet longer, to exert more and more faithfully my infinitesimal share of influence against those gigantic forms of evil which my observations and reflections and corresponding efforts during many years have educated my soul to hate. It is because I must leave so much which is hateful in the world to war against so much in it which is lovely, that I feel unready to depart from it. If, in all this, I betray the littleness of my faith in God, and a foolish self-magnification also, so be it. I had better be frank than disguised.

I shall leave an afflicted and distressed world. For war will continue its wholesale slaughters. Slavery, which is the worst type of war, will go on multiplying its agonized victims and matchless horrors. Intemperance will not stop perpetrating its innumerable murders, which are the worst kind of murders. Land monopoly will keep on robbing the poor of homes. Woman will continue to be cruelly and shamefully oppressed, until, in the long distance, she shall become sufficiently developed to see that she is oppressed. Civil government will continue its bad work, until, confined at last in its own narrow

province, the beneficence of its future legitimate functions shall exceed the mischief of its former usurpations.

But there is another great evil which I shall leave in the world. It is far greater than any I have spoken of. It is the priesthood—the sacerdotal or clerical order of men. The priests, be they those of China, Hindostan, Arabia, Persia, Europe, America, or elsewhere, and be they however honest, are the worst enemies of mankind. They are preëminently responsible for all great evils. For it is they preëminently who keep mankind down in those false states, and upon those low planes, where ignorance and superstition nourish and give scope to all great evils.

Why is it that Spain is so far behind the other great European States in the march of civilization? Why is she still infested with innumerable hordes of robbers? Why is she still making so inconsiderable contributions to the stock of human knowledge and useful inventions? Why is that persecuting spirit which, in times past, prompted her to shed the blood of scores of thousands of conscientious and innocent worshipers, still rife within all her borders? Why does she still cling to Slavery and the African slave-trade? It is all because her Government and people are still, as they have been for twelve hundred years, so thoroughly under the influence of the priests. It was nearly two centuries after Harvey discovered the circulation of the blood, before her physicians would believe in it. For nearly a century her schools rejected Newton's Astronomy and clung to Aristotle's Philosophy; and all this for the assigned reason that the one did not, and the other did harmonize with "revealed religion."

But the priesthood, say its advocates, is necessary to teach religion. I admit the necessity of religion. It is the one thing needful. Man is a religious being. He is made to appreciate the claims of God and man upon him; and to love his Great Father and equal brother. Had he but remained religious, this world, which is now so full of guilt and misery, would have been a paradise. But when he was in the infancy of his race, and was therefore ignorant, superstitions began to graft themselves upon his ignorance, and to mingle with and corrupt his religion. Ere long they were piled up into those huge struct.

ures of theology, or rather demonology, which cast their black and baleful shadows over the earth, and leave little room for the sunlight of truth to reach and feed and sustain the religion of truth. It was these superstitions which called for a priesthood; and to maintain and multiply them was, and still is, its one work. So far, therefore, from its being necessary to teach and promote religious truth, the office of the priesthood has ever been to put superstitions in the place of religion, and falsehoods in the place of truth. But I would not be so uncharitable and so unjust as to make wrong motives the spring of all its wrong deeds. In all ages the priesthood has been deluded as well as deluding.

A priesthood is not necessary to teach religion, It is as unnecessary as would be a professorship to teach the necessity of breathing. It is not religion that calls for a priesthood. It is such cabalistic mysteries and silly superstitions as abound in the sacred books that call for it. And the priesthood calls for these. They live and grow 'of each other. The people who are most given to these mysteries and superstitions crave the most priests. Where Americans are content with one priest, Spaniards want half a dozen. The happy man whose reason and courage have at last worked him clear of priestly dominion, has far more dread of a priest than of any other evil doer. He may still go to hear a Frothingham in New-York, a Furness in Philadelphia, and a Channing in Washington. But it is because they are simply preachers, instead of technical priests. He may still go to hear a Beecher and a Cheever. But it is because there is so much of the unpriestly, and so little of the priestly in them.

Oh no! religion needs not a priesthood! It is as simple and instinctive as is eating or drinking. It is as much born with us as is our foot or hand. From ancestral faults or other causes our moral affections may be born imperfect. So, too, may our foot or hand. But in neither case is our nature responsible for the imperfection. The circulation of the blood is not more a law of our nature than is loving all and being just to all. And religion is neither more nor less than loving all and being just to all.

The priests tell us that religion is a system and a science.

But it is neither. It is our heart's recognition of our relations and obligations. It is simply fidelity to our nature. Had we never deserted our nature, we should never have been irreligious; and all that religion now asks of us is but to return from that desertion. The religion of human nature is harmony, not only with human nature, but with all nature and with God. For every part of nature is harmonious with every other part of it. And all nature is in harmony with the Author of all nature.

The great Teacher of the duties of religion did not regard it as a system or a science, when he asked of the unlearned people: "And why judge ye not even of yourselves what is right?" He did not so regard it when he said: "I thank thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." The wise and prudent were busy with their bundles of superstitions and man-made religions. The God-made or true religion "babes" had—for they were born with it. All are born with it; and hence, when one loses this babe-religion, he must, in order to recover it, become a babe again. "Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein." Did the churches know Jesus and his religion, how quick would they cease from their jargon about Election, Atonement, Trinity, and all that, which not only a "little child," but even a big man can not understand! And how quick would they set themselves to the cultivation of that babe-religion, which lies within the comprehension of all! What if miracles could be proved by themselves, or could be proved by aught else, or what if they could prove something else, or even much else than their own contradiction to all nature and all human experience! Nevertheless, they can not be needed to prove religion; for that, being as self-evident as any other part of human nature, needs no proof.

By what line of argument is it that I hold the priesthood to be so largely responsible for the wrongs and wretchedness of the world? I answer that these come chiefly of the lack of religion, and that this lack comes chiefly of the priesthood. No men are so effective in shutting religion out of the world as they whose calling is to build up superstitions and falsehoods

in the place of religion. In all countries the priesthood wars upon nature, and insists that

“Nature must count her gold but dross
If she would gain the heavenly land.”

In all countries the priesthood insists that human nature must be supplanted by another and antagonistic one; the real by the imaginary; the known by the unknown.

To get rid of the priesthood is the greatest need of the people. But neither soon nor easily will this be accomplished. They are suited to each other, and have a strong affinity for each other. The people will not get rid of the priesthood so long as they admit the authority and conclusiveness of the Bible, the Koran, and the other sacred books, to interpret and inculcate which is the office of the priesthood. And they will continue to admit this authority and conclusiveness so long as they believe in the miracles by which these books are authenticated. Faith in miracles is at the base of their unquestioning submission to the Church and her books; and only in proportion as this submission shall cease, will the priesthood cease. Idle is it, then, to make direct war upon the priests. For the people will stand by them—and all the closer on account of such war. Idle, too, is it to make direct war upon the authority and infallibility of the sacred books. For so long as the people believe in the miracles bound up with these books, the books will be to them as the voice of God.

The only way to get rid of the priesthood is to educate the people to require evidence for what they believe, and to form habits of mind which shall make them as skeptical as they are now credulous. Skepticism is the first step in the world's progress from a blind and false to an intelligent and true faith; and whenever this first step is taken, then the occupation of the priesthood is gone—gone forever—with all its cabalisms and mysteries, mummeries and magic. Happily, too, the acquiring of these habits will be attended by the acquisition of knowledge; and the one will work with the other to undermine and overthrow the priesthood. Fear and wonder are the chief elements of superstition. These are supplied by ignorance. Courage and composure come of knowledge, and grow with it. Let it not be supposed that I am here running counter to what

I have before said, and that I am making an increase of knowledge essential to the understanding of what religion is. I am commending knowledge because it is essential to clear the way of religion of the superstitions and rubbish with which ignorance crowds it, and which it fatally confounds with religion. I admit that much knowledge is essential to the preservation of religion; and it is in the point of view just taken that it is so. The labors in India of Schwartz, the missionary, were wonderfully successful. Great numbers became truly and deeply religious. But in the next generation the field of his labors showed scarce a trace of those labors. The old waves of ignorance and superstition had again rolled over it; for the oppressed people had not mind enough and knowledge enough to beat them back.

And happily, too, the kind of knowledge, in acquiring which we are most successful in creating these habits of exacting proofs, is the very kind most adapted to save religion from being confounded with superstitions and overwhelmed by them. It is physical knowledge. Milton would have been as clear of superstitions and of submission to authority-religions as was Humboldt, had he acquired physical knowledge to the extent Humboldt did; and had he, moreover, lived in Humboldt's instead of in a comparatively dark and superstitious age. The study of the natural sciences — including, as it does, the habit of requiring strict proof — constantly diminishes that credulity through which superstition enters, and on which it feeds. The great reason why both naturalists and lawyers are generally wanting in sympathy with the churches and their superstitions, and are, therefore, so generally called irreligious, is that they are habituated to require evidence for what they believe. For various reasons of convenience and advantage, many of them give their assent to the popular religion; but the indifference with which they do so shows how little faith they have in it. But are not clergymen also trained to exact evidence? How can it be said that they are when they dispense with evidence in their premises, lay their foundations in assumptions, and make miracles their proofs? I add that the ecclesiastical theories, being more than other false theories the product of a wild imagination, can not fail to suffer peculiarly from the study of the nat-

ural sciences. For that study, exercising in so high a degree the reasoning and supreme faculties, must in a corresponding degree repress and chasten the imagination. And let me also say, in this connection, that while the mass of men construct their God out of their dreams and delusions, they who study the natural sciences are carried up through certainties to the certain God. The one imagine and the other prove the existence and character of God.

Natural science has already done much to weaken and dispel superstition. It has put astronomy in the place of astrology, and made alchemy and the hunt for the Philosopher's Stone and for the "Universal Solvent," give place to Chemistry. It has liberated millions from their degrading bondage to the authority of sacred books, and left their reason as free to play upon the pages of the Bible as upon the pages of any other book. It has relieved great numbers of their faith in the Mosaic Cosmogony. To the progress of natural science do we owe it that the Church no longer punishes men for their discoveries in natural science. To this progress do we owe it that, in spite of Bible authority, there is no more hanging of witches. How sad to reflect that the great and good Matthew Hale administered the law of witchcraft! And how sad to reflect that even at this day there are great and good men who, because the wild and guilty words are in the Bible, read with reverent submission instead of indignation and pity: "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live!" How strong must be that yoke of superstition which can humble and hold the necks of such men! Ages must pass away ere it will be broken to pieces. Scotland, dear Scotland! still superstitious, still believes in witches. And only one hundred and fifty years ago women were hung in England as witches. How deplorably superstitious was the honest and able John Wesley! And how low must have been his view of the moral grandeur and exalted and precious uses of the Bible! Else he would not have said: "The giving up of witchcraft is in effect giving up the Bible." I add that to this progress of natural science do we owe it that I can speak to you against the authority of the Bible, and you patiently hear me—and yet neither you nor I lose life or liberty for our presumption.

There may be many Astronomers and Geologists who from one consideration and another, consent to go along with the churches. But probably there is not on the whole earth one eminent Geologist or Astronomer, who entertains an undoubting faith in miracles or in any thing which rests upon mere authority, and is unsusceptible of proof. To every profound natural philosopher, a prayer for wet weather or dry is, notwithstanding the conditions on which Solomon told God to give rain, and notwithstanding the recorded success of Elijah in opening and shutting Heaven, an absurdity and the offspring of superstition. Eclipses are no longer a terror to Christendom, and deprecations of them no longer a part of her prayers. But men, instructed in natural science, believe that meteorology is as much governed by unchangeable laws as are the motions of the planets. I can not doubt that meteorology is yet to be so successfully studied that the coming weather will be calculated like the coming eclipse;—not, indeed, with as entire, but nevertheless, with sufficient accuracy. And by the way, what an advance it will be in earthly comforts and blessings, and how far surpassing in usefulness any of the wonderful discoveries and inventions of this age, when the farmer, learning from the philosopher the character of the coming season, shall know what kind of seed he had best cast into the ground;—and when, too, the mariner shall, by the help of the philosopher, know with what weather to lay his account. We owe much to science; but our posterity will owe more.

I hope it is not inferred from what I have said that I do not believe in prayer. I must cease to believe in human nature ere I can cease to believe in prayer. There is not on earth a more unnatural man than the prayerless man. Want, fear, and love urge men as naturally to the Heavenly Parent as they do children to the earthly parent. Emphatically and beautifully natural was Cornelius, who “prayed to God always.” There is nothing, in the bringing about of which men have or can have an agency, for which they should not at all times be ready to pray. Prayer for the crop is rational. But prayer for or against rain is as irrational as would be prayer for or against an eclipse. Prayer for a safe voyage is rational. It is, among other

things, a prayer for self-possession, wisdom, skill on the part of the navigator. But prayer for this or that wind is irrational.

Let, then, all those who would help clear the way for the spread, or rather for the restoration of religion—whether to clear it of the priests and of their sort of churches, or of the preposterous and reason-insulting claims set up for the sacred books, or of any other obstructions—let them go to work to deepen the study and diffuse the knowledge of the natural sciences. How soon would the priests disappear were there an adequate supply of able lecturers on natural philosophy, and a public ear educated to hear them! How soon then would the way be prepared for the preachers of the religion of nature and reason to take the place of the priests! Had we a thousand Agassizs and Mitchels to deliver the lectures, the empire of American superstitions would soon totter to its fall. All natural philosophers should feel it to be their noblest mission and highest obligation to drive superstitions and faith in miracles and priestly preachings out of the world, and to drive them out, chiefly to the end of getting them out of the way of religion.

I would not have it inferred from my praises of natural science that I set the intellectual above the moral. I hold the moral to be supreme, and the intellectual to be but its servant. Buckle, in his wondrously learned and grand writings on civilization, holds that "intellectual excellence" is more productive of "real good" than is "moral excellence;" and he holds this for the reason that while intellectual knowledge is ever increasing, the great moral truths, such as doing good to others, loving your neighbor as yourself, and forgiving your enemies, are not added to, and are the same that they always have been. I answer that they need neither multiplication nor change. They but need to be more faithfully applied. And when, with the help of increased "intellectual excellence," and the freedom from bigotry and superstition coming of it, they shall be applied a thousand fold more effectively, it will then be seen that "intellectual excellence" is not of more value than "moral excellence;" or, in other words, that the head is not more important than the heart. An old moral truth may have such great value that the more faithful and able enforcing of it shall make it worth more than numberless great intellectual discoveries.

If Buckle means only, as perhaps he does, that hitherto "moral excellence" has done less than intellectual excellence for mankind, I am not disposed to dissent from him. But it must be understood that such "moral excellence" has been largely made up of superstitious trash, and that the "intellectual excellence" to make the discrimination, has been lacking.

But I must pass on to notice some of the inquiries which will grow out of this Discourse.

Will there, when the priests are gone, be still a demand for preachers? Oh! yes, greater than ever! *What will they preach?* *Will they, like the priests, spend the time in telling their hearers what religion is?* Oh! no; a minute in a month will suffice for that! In a dozen words they can say that loving God supremely and our neighbor as ourself; or, more briefly, that being true to ourself; or, still more briefly, that being ourself, is religion. But the question remains, *What will they preach?* They will preach duties. They will tell their hearers what religion calls for in the heart and life. This is what men need to hear, instead of sermons to show that religion consists in this and that doctrine and in this and that crotchet. Why do thousands flock to hear Henry Ward Beecher? It is not only nor mainly because he is so eloquent and so marvelously gifted. It is because he tells his hearers so much of what religion calls for, and consumes so little of their time with those fanciful and superstitious creeds which with most persons make up both warp and woof of religion. The men who most love to see the noble Cheever strike his gigantic blows for Freedom give no credit for them to his ecclesiasticism; but they give it all to his religion, or, in other words, to his love of God and man.

And what shall we do for churches when the present ones shall have died out with the priests? We shall have infinitely better; for we shall then have churches in which reason will do as much to enlighten and elevate, as superstition does in the present churches to darken and degrade.

And what will become of the Bible when men shall cease to take it as an authority, and to worship it as a fetish, and to possess and prize it as a charm or an amulet? Rather ask what will become of it in the mean time and during the superstitious regard for it. For there is no little danger that an age of growing intelligence,

disgusted with the exaggerated claims for the Bible, will reject it. But when this book shall, like any other book, be submitted to human judgment, and men shall feel at liberty to discriminate between the merits of its different parts—as, for instance, between the incredible story of Jonah and the whale, and the felt truth of the Sermon on the Mount—then will it be a new and an inestimable blessing. When they shall feel entirely free to accept one part of it and to reject another, on the sole ground that they believe in the one part and not in the other, then will the Bible exert a power infinitely greater than before—and a power for good only, and not as before for evil also. When the matchless inspirations and sublimities of the Bible shall stand no longer in authority and superstition but in reason and truth only, then they will no longer be made of but the same account with the false and foolish things mixed up in the same pages with them. And then the reader of the Bible will open his understanding and his heart to these inspirations and sublimities all the more freely and widely from being no longer under the conscious obligation to accept along with them the silly story of the dry path through the Red Sea, and the revolting and disgusting stories of God's approval of polygamy, and of the murder of innocent women and children. Now, good men feel that they would lose the Bible, were they to lose their confidence in the least part of it. But then they would feel that they still have the Bible, notwithstanding that here and there are passages unworthy a place in it.

Luther and his fellow-reformers nobly stood forth for the right of private judgment. What a pity that they and their successors were not more consistently, comprehensively, and perseveringly faithful to it. Then had Protestantism been the blessing and glory of the whole earth. But, essentially, it soon sunk down to the low level of Roman Catholic superstitions—and there it still lies. With no more impunity can the American Protestant than the American Catholic dissent from the ecclesiastical standards. For such dissent the one is hurled out of the Church as quickly as the other. The Protestant boast of the right of private judgment is utterly groundless. Every authority-religion is necessarily incompatible with such right. It is owing to the progress of science and civilization—a prog-

ress continually resisted by ecclesiasticism—that either Protestantism or Catholicism is this day restrained from repeating its bloody and enormous crimes. The superstitious religionist—or, in other words, he who receives his religion upon authority—tolerates no dissent from his religion. If in the circumstances and under the influences that Calvin was, he will, like Calvin, consent to the burning of the dissenter. All this comes of his belief that his whole bundle of religious views and theories—every line and letter in it—is certainly true, because certainly attested by the miraculous interpositions of Heaven. But how quickly this obstinate—obstinate because blind—confidence begins to relax when the rays of reason and knowledge fall upon his bundle! And this is not only because the rays reveal his errors, but because reason and knowledge are as modest and hesitating as superstition and ignorance are conceited and dogmatizing. Reason and knowledge are conscious of their fallible workings; and therefore do they tolerate differences of opinion. They inspire diffidence as much as ignorance does positiveness. As a general rule men are confident in proportion to their ignorance and unreasonableness, and lose their confidence as they advance in knowledge and reasonableness. It is not because of his zeal that a good man sinks into a fanatic. Zeal in a good cause can not be excessive. The opponent of Slavery and Intemperance can not be too zealous. It is the combination of ignorance with zeal that makes the fanatic. Enlighten the ignorance, and the conceit and dogmatism, bigotry and intolerance, recklessness and destructiveness, of which fanaticism is compounded, all pass away.

I value the Bible above every other book. I would not exchange it for all other books. And yet I am free to say that a man had better throw away the Bible than retain it as an authority. A conventional and false morality is the product of authority-books and authority-religions. Hence it is that while the religion of nature and reason utterly and sternly forbid slavery and war, land monopoly and the drinking of intoxicating liquors, and the oppressions of woman, even very religious people (after the ecclesiastical type) can go for them all. Their morality is as unreasonable and unnatural as is their religion.

Finally, what will become of Jesus when the age of superstition shall be past, and the priesthood and the authority of the Bible shall be no more? I answer, that when men shall cease to degrade him by childishly thinking either the better or the worse of him for the miracles and superstitions connected with his name, then will Jesus have in their eyes a new preciousness and a far higher glory. When their great use of him shall be to study him in the light of those wondrous words in which he spake as never man spake, then will this sublimest and veriest God-man be known in all the earth, and his name everywhere be full of power and blessedness and salvation. Oh! fear not that the interest in Jesus will decline as the religion of nature shall prevail! He who is the model and perfection of human nature can not fail to become dearer to men as they become less superstitious and unnatural, more reasonable and natural.

I close with reäffirming the supreme importance of religion. I refer not to the next life. That is but the continuation of this, and we begin there just where we leave off here. If we are upon low planes here, we shall enter upon low planes there. If here we sustain high relations to wisdom and goodness, we shall there also. It is to the uses of religion for this life that I refer—for this life, in which we have seen and proved it to be the great balance-wheel, without which all falls into disorder, confusion, and ruin; in which we have seen and proved it to be the strongest tie between human hearts, and the only tie between human hearts and God's heart. Painful is it to reflect how religion has been hindered and held back by superstition and its priesthoods. But joyful is it to see that knowledge, which is as fatal to superstition and its priesthoods as they are to religion, is at last beginning to spread in such forms of certainty and common-sense and practical usefulness, as warrant the belief that it will surely, though it may be but slowly, cover and bless the whole earth.

LETTER TO DOCTOR CHEEVER.

PETERBORO, March 6th, 1863.

REV. DR. G. B. CHEEVER, New-York :

MY DEAR SIR: I have read your review of Bishop Colenso's Criticisms on the Pentateuch.

That men can not believe in God without believing "in every part of the Scriptures"—"in their perfect and infallible truth and certainty"—is, as I was aware, a doctrine of most of the churches. Nevertheless I was somewhat surprised to find that this exceedingly harsh doctrine has your sanction.

I readily admit that, in the sense of loving God, men can not believe in him unless they also believe in the great moral principles and precepts of the Bible. It is only the good heart that lovingly believes in God. Such a heart, wherever or whenever found—be it in the depths of Africa or antiquity—never fails to respond to those principles and precepts. But there are large portions of this book, belief or unbelief in which is a purely intellectual exercise. Whether a particular battle is or is not in all respects rightly described in it is a question of evidence. Precisely the same kind or degree of evidence may not come before all who are gathering it. And even if there should, nevertheless from the difference between them, constitutional as well as educational, they might not be able to arrive at the same conclusion. Half the jurors believe that the evidence is sufficient to convict the accused, and the other half do not. One man can resist the multiplied proofs that the human race has existed on the earth more than six thousand years, and another is obliged to yield to them. To say that some persons are so prejudiced against the Bible as to be incapable of deciding fairly or according to evidence, is but to open the door for

the reply that some persons are so partial to it that they can not decide impartially on any thing in it. Nevertheless, whatever may be the play of prejudice or partiality in solving this question about the battle, it remains true that it must be solved by means of evidence. But the question whether we shall lovingly believe in God finds its solution in the affections of the heart rather than in evidence—overflowing and convincing as is the evidence. Insist, I care not how intolerantly, that all men shall believe in essential and eternal goodness. He is a bad man who does not believe in it. But do not condemn men for believing or disbelieving in that which with a good heart they may either believe or disbelieve in.

Perhaps you will say that there is not this room, which I claim there is, for an honest difference of judgment. Perhaps you will say that here is no occasion for summoning and sifting witnesses; and that the miracles of the Bible prove beyond all possible question the truth of every part of the Bible. I might admit that whoever had the miracles needed no more proof of what they prove, and had no right to call for more. But we have only the record of the miracles; and this record, it must be borne in mind, can prove nothing until itself is proved. Moreover, as we are favored with no miracles for proving the truth of the record, we are obliged to set about proving it in the common method of proving records. I do not forget that the practice is to cite the miracles for the truth of the Bible, and the Bible for the truth of the miracles. But this glaring instance of vicious circular reasoning forcibly reminds one of the servant who, in answer to his master's quickly successive inquiries for the harrow and the plow, said that the harrow was with the plow and the plow with the harrow.

It is much insisted on that whoever really believes in one part of the Bible believes in every other part of it. It is true that he, who really believes in the inculcations of justice and mercy in one part of the Bible, must, from the nature of things, believe in the like inculcations in other parts of it. But surely there is no such natural connection between all parts of the Bible; as makes belief in some of them necessitate belief in the others. It is not a necessity in the nature of things, that belief in the story of Samson should go along with belief in the Sermon on the Mount. In the justice and love which Jesus taught

I am compelled, by the nature of things—by my own nature—to believe. But I am under no such compulsion to believe that he was born here rather than there—this year rather than that. To believe in the justice and love, I need not go out of myself for evidence; but I must do so in order to believe in the other. The testimony of my heart suffices in the former case; but in the latter I must seek for other and outward testimony. It will be said that if we are not sure of the truth of what the Bible says of the birth of Christ, we can not be sure that it truly ascribes to him such high and heavenly utterances. I admit we can not be. Nevertheless, of the utterances and their matchless power—and this is the great point—we are sure. And sure too are we that the utterer, whatever his name, whenever or wherever born, spake as “never man spake,” and stood upon an immeasurably higher plane of life than man ever stood upon before. I am not entirely certain when or where Shakspeare was born, nor that he wrote the plays ascribed to him. But I am certain of the plays and of their power to stir the soul; and certain am I also that whoever, whenever, wherever he was that wrote them, he was incomparably the greatest of all known dramatists. And now, compared with these certainties, what else is there in all this connection of any value?

It is often said that we must believe in the possibility of the miracles, because the miracles Jesus wrought are needed to prove his divinity. It is his *words* that prove his divinity. The power to work miracles can be claimed for any man, and with such evidence as would convince multitudes. But there has been only one man from whom the divine words attributed to Jesus could have proceeded. The celebrated Brahmin, Ram-mohun Roy, omitted the miracles from his translation of the New Testament, for the reason that the Jewish miracles being so infinitely surpassed in wondrousness by the Hindoo miracles, would serve rather to disparage than exalt the precious and sublime truths with which they stand connected. Then, again, it is so difficult to *prove* the truth of ancient miracles to those who deny the truth of modern miracles. How can one who, requiring evidence for all his beliefs, refuses faith in the liquefaction of the blood of St. Januarius, give his assent to a miracle far back in the depths of antiquity? The miracle in the former case is attested by known and living witnesses, but in

the latter by unknown and dead ones. How can he then, provided he be swayed less by superstition than by evidence, utterly reject the former miracle, and be entirely sure of the latter one?

I wish with all my heart that you would be content to teach only the one true religion, which you do teach, and to leave it to others to teach the nominal and mistaken religions. This one true or natural religion is the same in all lands and all ages. It is this which made beautiful and sublime the lives of Confucius, Socrates and Plato. It is this which shone preëminently, ay, culminated, in the life of Jesus. It is of this that your own honest, earnest, strong life comes. It is the religion of human nature; and it is inspired by the Author of all nature. It is as simple as it needs to be in order to be the religion of the simple masses. The unlearned can both understand and practice it. Thousands of the slaves, who are now coming forth from the great American Prison-House, prove that they who know nothing else may nevertheless know this religion.

Greatly do they err who suppose that Jesus was the author of a religion. He taught no other than this religion of nature, which great and good men of all the climes and all the centuries had taught before. He but summoned men to be true to the old religion—to the demands or religion of their own unchanged and unchangeable nature. This nature he recognizes to be their sufficient instructor in their religious duties; and hence does he inquire of them: "Why judge ye not even of yourselves what is right?"

I said that this religion is simple. Paul makes it nothing else than to "love thy neighbor as thyself;" and Jesus sums it all up in doing as we would be done by. That to Him who made us capable of this equal love, and whose name is "Love," we owe supreme love, is an irresistible inference.

But although there is only one true religion, there are innumerable conventional religions. It is only a very small proportion of men who have the true religion. A very large proportion have a conventional one. Even those who have the true religion have, with comparatively few exceptions, a conventional religion also. Meet with a Hindoo or Persian or Turk who has the true religion or, in other words—a heart to deal justly with his neighbor in all things—and, with scarce an instance to

the contrary, you find that he combines with it a conventional religion drawn from his Sacred Books. So too it is but a very small proportion of the religiously just men of Christendom, be they Jews or Gentiles, who to their true or natural religion do not add some one of the false and artificial religions, which are claimed to be authorized by Jewish writings. Do not understand me to say that the true religion is not also to be found in the Vedas, the Zendavesta, the Koran, and the Bible. Each inculcates it—the Bible with infinitely more clearness, fullness and power than does any of the other Sacred Books. Nevertheless, from each of them are materials drawn to build up unnatural and false religions.

I do not forget that they who unite with the true religion a conventional one make the latter an essential part of the former. Very certain is it that they do so who draw their conventional religion from the Bible. This is manifestly the case with yourself. But these conventional religions contain much that is at war with the natural or true religion—much that is repugnant to the moral sense produced by the latter. Even the conventional religion made up from the Bible, is obnoxious to this censure. For instance, it requires us to believe that God loved Jacob and hated Esau, “being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil.” Will it be said that he loved the one and hated the other for what they would become? But Jacob became a mean man and Esau a magnanimous one. Again, it requires us to believe that God gave Saul’s wives into David’s bosom, and laid him under obligations of gratitude for it. And, again, it requires us to believe that there may be upon God’s authority wholesale slaughters of women and children.

Alas! the innumerable and appalling proofs in all ages of the disparaging and neutralizing of the natural or true religion by coupling with it a conventional and false religion! The Rev. Dr. Thomas Worcester of Boston is reputed to be a very good man. Nevertheless, he admits that until very recently he believed “Slavery to be a good thing”—in other words, the system, which forbids marriage and parental rights and all rights, and markets men as beasts, “to be a good thing.” Whence did he derive this belief? Evidently not from his natural or true religion, but from the conventional and false one which he had unhappily combined with it. All over the Southern half

of our country, and extensively over the Northern half also, Slavery is held to be right, on the ground that the Bible makes it right. I agree with you that the Bible condemns it. But good men differ at this point; and bad men so read it as to suit themselves. The natural religion—the religion of doing as you would be done by—instantly and utterly forbids slavery. No man would be a slave. And, were there no pro-slavery conventional religion in which their conscience could find shelter, few could brace themselves up to be slaveholders, and none would be allowed to be. Thrice happy for the interests of freedom and humanity that you read the Bible to be against slavery! But, alas! should you in some new light shed upon its meaning, come to read it otherwise, then, though all nature cries out trumpet-tongued against the abomination, you would be for it! For with you that Book is above all nature. Or if you prefer it, that Book is with you the supreme and authoritative interpreter of nature.

In my reference to miracles I did not deny their possibility. I agree with you that your conventional religion (I speak not now of your true one) needs miracles to authenticate it. I add that there is not a little of beautiful fitness in proving the religion which is a war upon nature by miracles which are also a war upon nature. On the other hand, you will agree with me that if the true religion is the simple and obvious thing which I have defined it to be, miracles are no more needed to prove it than to prove the sun in the heavens.

This breaking up of the churches, which has begun in our day, does, I confess, bring no sorrow to my heart. Her way must be clean swept of them before Truth can “have free course and be glorified.” They are the bulwarks of superstition instead of religion. They are huge conventionalisms, which have usurped the place of nature, and the place of the simple, rational churches of Jesus Christ. They are, and none the less effectively because unintentionally, the great enemies of human progress, human holiness, and human happiness. I rejoiced to see right feeling for the slave—in one word, religion—break up the Baptist Church and the Methodist Church. For this breaking up not only proves that religion finds hearts in these churches which she can work upon, but it awakens the reasonable hope that large portions of their members will continue to improve

and to go onward and upward until they shall at last have eliminated from their creeds all the conventional and artificial, and be prepared to take part in building up the church of the one true religion. And now I rejoice to see that science is beginning to break up the Church of England. It would be an entirely reasonable expectation, that the Baptist and Methodist Churches, characterized as they are by a wider diffusion of piety than of learning, might be torn asunder by a religious question. As reasonably would it be expected that science might make breaches in the Church of England—a Church in which there are so many who appreciate science—a Church which, notwithstanding the much heartfelt and holy worship in it, is nevertheless more distinguished for its learning than for its piety. The only way to have held back Colenso and the Authors of the celebrated *Essays and Reviews* from being disturbing forces in the Church of England was to have held them back from Geology, Astronomy, and the other fields of science. And the only way to prevent others from following them and becoming even disrupting forces in that Church, is to roll back the wheels of civilization. To secure the Bible from all possible criticism, they will have to be rolled back not only to the comparatively recent date, when belief in God's authority for polygamy and the most savage warfare was well-nigh universal; but they will have to be rolled back to those early centuries, when none doubted that the Sun and the Moon were made but to be candles for the Earth.

You ought not to wonder at the modern growth of infidelity. It is infidelity to conventional and superstitious religions—to religions unadapted to modern times. Ages, which believed in Astrology, Alchemy, and the hanging of witches, and the wildest doctrines and usages of an all-swaying superstition, could, of course, and very consistently and easily, resign themselves to such religions. But it is not strange that an age, which puts Astronomy in the place of Astrology, and Chemistry in the place of Alchemy, and enlightened laws in the place of fanatical traditions, and which is coming up rapidly out of the slough of ignorance and superstition toward the summits of science, should be weary of such religions and impatient to throw them off.

You long for the enlightenment and blessedness of the whole earth. So do I. But it is mainly in very different ways that

we seek to accomplish it. You would supplant with the Jewish Sacred Books the Sacred Books of all other peoples. I, on the contrary, would call upon the disciples of Mohammedanism and of all the other religions to learn, love, and practice that one religion of reason, nature, and Jesus, which is common to all these Books.

How vain the hope that the Turks, the Persians, the Chinese, or Hindoos will ever consent to cast upon their most cherished names and writings the contempt which they would cast upon them should they acknowledge the Jewish Books to be true and their own to be false! But how reasonable the hope that, as all shall come to know, love, and practice the one true religion, the interest of all in their respective Sacred Books, save only in those portions of them which partake of and illustrate the essence of that religion, will pass away forever!

The churches must go down before the powers of religion and science. Their walls are not impervious to the heavenly influences of the one, nor have they strength to resist the increasingly mighty assaults of the other. And as surely as these churches shall go down, others will take their places, that will teach and illustrate the religion of reason and nature; and that will know men not by their theological metaphysics, and mysteries, but solely as the Great Teacher of the religion of nature and reason requires, "by their fruits." But these churches of a conventional religion will linger for ages—Science is not yet ripe enough, nor diffused enough, to perform its part in overthrowing them. A portion of the scientific men who concern themselves about religion, had embraced their conventional religion before their minds were stored with science and their habits of exacting legitimate and ample evidence for their beliefs were formed. Such will be like to live and die in the superstition that their religion is too sacred to be put upon trial. Then a much larger portion of the men of science, though despising this superstition, do, like other men, care for the public favor and the advantages that come of it. Hence they conclude to drift along with the superstition, instead of exercising the courage to expose and overthrow it. Not until science shall be far more spread through the masses, and not until it shall become so sound and uncompromising, as to require all things, and that too even in the department of religion, to be proved,

will a large share of the scientific men strike boldly at the absurdities in the religious systems. But they will do so then. For then it will not be unpopular to do so; and therefore not unsafe to their interests. Then they will find willing hearers—a good soil to cast the seeds of skepticism into. Skeptics are much dreaded. Nevertheless, the world will never have its race of sound believers until it has first had its race of enlightened and honest skeptics.

In the mean time, however, and whilst science is mustering its forces for its final and effectual onset upon these artificial and superstitious religions and their churches, here one man and there another, who can afford the personal loss of striking at hoary and popular errors, and who are willing, for conscience and truth's sake, to incur hatred and scorn, must continue their protests against identifying religion with things which are no part of religion, and with things which misrepresent, conflict with, and neutralize it.

I hope you will not be offended at what I have written; and yet I can not be entirely sure that you will not. For I am aware that one part of the orthodox training is, that nothing in the whole range of orthodoxy is an open question, or liable to a wise and an honest doubt. Hence I was not surprised to find you making light of both the sense and the candor of Bishop Colenso.

It is this perfect confidence that in the whole huge bundle of beliefs, which make up orthodoxy, be it in Christendom or Hindostan or elsewhere, there is not the slightest flaw, nor aught which a man sound in both head and heart can find to criticise—it is this, which renders religious reformation, be it in Christendom or Heathendom, so difficult and so distant.

The political economist allows me to confront him. Often has a slaveholder heard my Anti-Slavery patiently and kindly. Often so has a rumseller heard my Temperance. But when I speak on religion, many of my neighbors, and those of them too who for thirty or forty years have heard me quite willingly on all other subjects, refuse to hear me. They are too civil and too kind to say either that I am foolish or dishonest; and yet, when religion is my theme, they can hardly help feeling that I am one or the other, if not indeed both; so almost impossible is it for them to conceive that a man can have both

sense and candor, or even either, who ventures a doubt on any thing in orthodox theology.

Theology! Theology!! Oh! how the poor world has in all ages been cursed by it! But gradually, though slowly, one thing after another escapes from its thralldom to theology. Now it is Geology, and now it is Astronomy; and by and by, in the progress of science and civilization, religion itself will escape from it.

With great regard, your friend,

GERRIT SMITH.

THE GOOD SEE: THE BAD ARE BLIND.

DISCOURSE IN PETERBORO, MAY 3, 1863.

JESUS says that "the pure in heart shall see God." Here is the key to the stores of divine knowledge. Purity of heart unlocks them. "Keep thyself pure," says Paul to Timothy. This is the way to clarify the spiritual vision. With the increase of purity is the increase of spiritual discernment. Why is "the path of the just as the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day"? Because he continually becomes more and more just, more and more pure, and therefore more and more enlightened. Why says Jesus, that doing God's will is the way to learn God's truth? Because the doer, becoming thereby better and purer, becomes consequently more discerning. Why says the prophet, "Then shall we know if we follow on to know the Lord"? Because at every step in that direction our purity, and therefore our knowledge, increases. Why says the Apostle that "men stumble at the word, being disobedient"? Because, whilst obedience sheds light upon the way, disobedience darkens it. The disobedient stumble in the darkness which comes of their disobedience. But in the light which flows out from obedience, or rather from the purity generated by obedience, the word is seen and welcomed. How full of light would be the man who should attain to absolute purity! He would be as the "angel standing in the Sun."

We learn from our text—from this power of a pure heart—how it is that Jesus was made capable of his wondrous words. The words of no one, either before or after him, were so searching, so spiritual, so sublime. He spake as never man spake. His purity explains it. This perfect purity, giving him the fullest access to God and the fullest sight and knowledge of God, enabled him to speak as God. I say not whence this

purity. I speak but of its power. And without inquiring how else he is one with God, I hold that from his purity he is one with him. Nay, Jesus teaches that such purity as his disciples are capable of, would bring them also into this oneness. If he does not teach it when he says, "I in them and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one," nevertheless does he not teach it when he says, "Be ye therefore perfect even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect"? His injunction of this absolute moral perfectness implies his belief in its possibility. And surely whoever attains to this perfectness attains to oneness with God—oneness too at that point where alone it is needed, and where alone it is possible. Man can not be—does not need to be—wise and strong as God, but only sinless and innocent as God.

There are critics who regard the claim of the Son to oneness with the Father as an arrogant or at least an ignorant assumption. They would not, however, had they themselves the purity of heart which opens the eye on God and identifies with God.

And do we not learn from our text how also to account for the wondrous works as well as the wondrous words of Jesus? I say not that in the record of these works all is literal truth, and nothing figurative or fanciful. I say not that there were miracles amongst them. I do not believe that Jesus ever performed a miracle; that any man ever performed one; that God himself ever performed one. A miracle is a violation or arrest of the laws of nature. Why then should he who is the Author of nature be found working a miracle?—in other words, be found warring upon the works of his own hands? Miracles would put anarchy in the place of the government of the Universe; and surely it is not for Him, "with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning," to set Himself to subverting that government. Moreover, God requires us to adjust ourselves to his laws, and to find all our duty and all our happiness in such adjustment. How then can it be supposed that he would himself introduce uncertainty into these laws, and a corresponding uncertainty into our sense of the necessity of obeying them? Is it for him to strip them of the honor of being unchangeable and eternal, and to degrade them from a certain to an uncertain rule of conduct? I believe that Jesus

did nothing contrary to but every thing in accordance with these laws. I believe, too, that were we on his moral plane, or, in other words, had we his purity of heart, we too should be capable of doing such wondrous works as he did. And might I not add on his own authority, even "greater works than these"? What can be wrought on that plane—what, for instance, is the power there of the moral over the material—we know not now, but perhaps we shall "know hereafter." This much, however, we should feel assured of even now—that the higher the moral plane on which the worker stands, the more does he seek to work by law, and the less is he inclined to attempt miracles and jugglery; the more does he cling to the whole law, physical, mental, and moral, and the less accessible is he to pleas, be they in behalf of the advantage of man or the glory of God, for departing from it.

It is true that the wonders Jesus is said to have wrought might have appeared to the beholders, and even to ourselves, to be supernatural—when, indeed, they were but simply natural. For not only not the earlier and ignorant, but not even the latest and enlightened generations know all the phenomena and power of nature. Nevertheless it should be remembered that the greater the recorded wonder, which challenges our faith, the more proof should we require that it actually occurred. It is not enough, in order to our believing in them, to argue that the "miraculous works" of Jesus were all according to natural laws. It should first be proved that there were such works; and that finding them on some old pages is evidence that there were. With a triumphant air do some defenders of the "Christian miracles" argue that they were done according to natural law. But whether they were done at all, is the first question. It is time enough to have the explanations of the fact after the proof of the fact. But it is only by outraging all the laws of evidence that we can become *sure* of the occurrence of the "Christian miracles." And why should these laws be ignored in the department of Theology any more than elsewhere?

There are many who, disbelieving that Jesus is the essential God, doubt the truth of some of his words, and make light of some of his warnings. These doubters can be measurably

replied to without going into the discussion of the question whether his nature, though "filled with all the fullness of God," is other than a simply human nature. For, in the first place, his spiritual teachings commend themselves to our reason so far as in its undeveloped state it can comprehend them; and in the second place, where they exceed its comprehension, they are to be respected as the teachings of One whose spiritual discernment of spiritual things is proportioned to his matchless purity.

Our reason teaches that a great change in the common character of men is necessary. But well is it for us to have Jesus add that this change must be so radical as to merit the name of a New-Birth; and that this New-Birth is impossible without the help of the Divine Spirit. Reason sees in the light of nature another life. It sees a heaven and a hell. But this does not render useless the testimony of Jesus at this point. The report which he brings of the revelations made to his purity and to his sight of God, serves both to confirm the deductions of our reason and to add to them. It is reasonable to listen to what Jesus tells us of the future blessedness of the righteous and the future misery of the wicked. Is it said, in order to shake confidence in his communications, that he does not claim to have knowledge at all points? A man's not being a mathematician does not impeach his moral knowledge; nor should it be argued, from Christ's confessed ignorance of the time of some future event, that there is any lack in his stores of spiritual wisdom for our use. Let then the righteous take comfort and the wicked take warning from what Jesus says of the future life. Some words more in this connection. But few of the righteous should take much thought of the heaven beyond this life. Most of them should be content with the heaven that is here, and which is incidental to their labors of love here. The happiness which, by a sure law of reflection, comes back to our hearts from the hearts we have made happy, is quite enough for us in this pilgrimage. Most good men should be too busy too brave, and too self-forgetful to indulge in the weakness of longing for heaven. Here and there are good men shut out and cut off from the world by disease, oppression, imprisonment and other causes. Their earthly prospects are all blotted out, and their earthly hopes all crushed. To such it is permitted

to sigh for heaven. Their poor weary hearts have no other refuge. Before such afflicted ones Paul sets the "exceeding and eternal weight of glory;" To such Jesus says: "Let not your heart be troubled. In my Father's house are many mansions."

"The pure in heart shall see God." This is not the promise of a supernatural reward. It is but the declaration of what must naturally and necessarily come from being pure. My hearers, shall we ever see God? We shall if we are pure, and not otherwise. Not the soundness of our creed, nor our connection with the most orthodox church, nor high hopes of heaven, can suffice to open our eyes upon the blessed One. The consecration of our faculties, inward and outward, to purity alone can. The selfish man can not see God, for his low aims are at fatal war with purity. He is corrupted and shriveled by them as surely as the unselfish man is purified and expanded by the deeds and designs of his benevolence.

Men are lost who do not see God. They grope in blindness. This nation is lost because it did not see God. I call it lost. I hope it will yet be found. It was dead; but I hope it will live again. It did not see the avenging God—the Divine Nemesis—in the black cloud which had for many years been gathering over it. Nay, it was too blind to see even the clouds, much less the cause of them. Very great was its blindness, because it was induced by oppression—by extreme and long-persisted-in oppression. From the day of its birth it had made merchandise of humanity and trafficked in the image of God as in hogs and horses. As nothing is so sure to soften the heart and clear the eye as sympathy with the poor, so there is nothing that so effectually generates hardness and blindness as oppression of the poor.

Let me not, however, do injustice to my nation. I used to speak of it as the guiltiest of all nations. But I now think that I was wrong in doing so. This nation was the first to undertake to build on the foundation of equal rights; and it did not count the cost of building on so broad a foundation. What were our fathers, that they and they alone should be able to build upon it? They had been fashioned in a school of politics mainly European. They saw no wrong in land-monopoly, in the governmental license and patronage of the dram-shop, in

the scanty concession of rights to woman, in the various meddlings of government with the natural rights of its subjects; and but very few of them saw much wrong in slavery. Indeed the great mass of them were, in their political qualifications, but little better fitted than Europeans to erect a national structure on the foundation of the equal rights of all. Nor had they a religion to this end any better than their politics. Their religion was the same with that of Europe, and was, even to a greater extent than is that of their descendants, a superstition. It was not the religion of humanity. It did not array itself on the side of human rights. No nation's religion, either in ancient or modern times, ever did so. Scattered individuals, all along since Christ, and all along before him, had the religion of humanity. But no nation, nor any considerable portion of a nation, ever had it. That blessedness is not to be until the theologies—relics of ages of ignorance and superstition—shall have passed away. Until then the conventional religion of those theologies will effectually hinder the true religion—the Christ-religion of doing as you would be done by—the religion which goes for man and man's rights—from becoming the religion of a nation.

Other nations—for instance, Mexico, and the South-American States, and France—copied our attempt to build on this only true foundation. It will not do to say that any of them have succeeded. They, like ourselves, have, for the lack of the natural religion in the place of the theological religion, and for the lack of politics corresponding with the natural religion, failed. But shall the nations, our own included, who have attempted to build on the only true foundation, be counted more guilty than the nations which have escaped the failure only by shrinking from the attempt? Certainly not. Rather let those nations that have tried to build on it be honored for making the trial, which other nations had not the virtue and courage to make. Better is the drunkard who tries, though in vain, to reform himself than the drunkard who is past making the trial.

Our little church is this afternoon to celebrate the Lord's Supper. It is not alone because of the recorded injunction of Jesus upon his disciples that we celebrate it. Perhaps, as is extensively held, this injunction was upon his cotemporaries

only; though I do not see why there is not as good reason for us, as there was for them, to celebrate it.

If it is right for the admirers of Washington to come together to honor their hero, or for the admirers of Jackson to do so, why is it not right for the admirers of one immeasurably greater and dearer than Washington or Jackson to do likewise? But our highest reason for celebrating the Lord's Supper is that the occasion is preëminently suited to purify our hearts by bringing him so distinctly and affectingly before our minds. We need more purity of heart, that we may see more of God—ay, that we may see him where now we see him not. No means to this increase of purity is so effectual as "looking unto Jesus." By perseverance in looking unto him, we shall at last attain to such a degree of purity and to such a resulting degree of spiritual vision, as shall enable us to see God in all his works and all his ways; in all his creations and all his providences. Then shall we see him not only in the sun and stars, and in the sublimities of the mountain and the ocean, and the fruitfulness of the field which waves with food for man and beast, and in the flowers which deck the earth; but we shall also see him in the history of the individual and the nation. Then shall we see him in the horrors of this surpassingly horrid war, and in his judgments upon this surpassingly oppressive nation. And then too shall we have in our own bosoms sweet and blessed experience of the truth, that "the pure in heart shall see God."

LETTER TO HENRY WARD BEECHER.

“STONEWALL” JACKSON.

PETERBORO, May 20th, 1863.

REV. HENRY WARD BEECHER :

MY DEAR SIR: I have read in the *Independent* your column on the late “Stonewall” Jackson. I honor him for his earnestness, sincerity, and devoutness. I grant that he was a deeply religious man. But I can not agree with you that his religion was of the Christ-type. How can it be in the light of your own admission, that he was “the champion of slavery”—the champion of that system which denies all right to husband, wife, child; all right to resist the ravisher or murderer; and which works and whips and markets men as beasts? How can it be in the light of your admission, that “he was fighting against the natural rights of man”? Nevertheless you declare him to be “a rare and eminent Christian.” I readily admit that even these enormous crimes against justice and humanity are compatible with high religiousness. But I can not admit that he who is guilty of them is grounded in the Christ-religion and is “eminent” in its graces. For the Christ-religion is simply a religion of justice. It does as it would be done by. It is for, and not “against the natural rights of man.” For it is simply the religion of nature.

I do not wonder that the Churches regard Jackson’s as the Christ-religion. For the bundle of dogmas, Trinity, Atonement, Resurrection of the Body, Miracles, etc., which they make up and hold to be essential to salvation, he deeply believed in. I say not whether these dogmas are true or false—originating in fancies or in facts. I but say that they are no part of the Christ-religion. Natural justice toward God and man—so earnest and entire as to fill the heart and life with its presence and power—this, and this alone, is the essence and the all of that religion. Think not that I look for such justice where the Divine Spirit is not at work to produce it. In order to attain

to it, depraved man—man who has run away from his nature—must be “born again.”

Jackson had the theology of a Church. But he certainly had not a large share of the religion of Christ. Christ was opposed to all the theologies; for he saw that they all stand in the way of the one true religion—the religion of reason and nature. A theological, or common Church religion, is a traditional religion, authenticated by miracles and other outward testimonies. At the best, it is but a history, and full of all the characteristic uncertainty of history. Moreover, if parts of the history, or of its accepted interpretation, shall prove false, then, as is held, the deceived disciple is lost. Such is the untrustworthy plank on which men are urged to embark their all. But Christ's religion is no historic nor external thing. It cometh not from the past, and it “cometh not with observation.” It “is within” us. It is written by the finger of God in the moral consciousness; and every one, who will listen to God's voice in his soul, will know this religion, or, in other words, will know what is right. “And why,” says Jesus, “even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?” Instead of sending his hearers to Moses, he sends them to themselves. Instead of bidding them go to priests to get religion interpreted, he tells them to interpret it for themselves. Instead of making religious truths a mystery, which only the wise and learned can unravel, he thanks his Father for having “revealed them unto babes.” Instead of teaching a religion as fluctuating and uncertain as human testimony is fluctuating and uncertain, he teaches a religion founded and fashioned in human nature, and therefore as unchangeable as human nature—a religion the same in all climes and ages, because human nature is the same in all climes and ages. Instead of teaching a cabalistic and conventional religion, whose rules are hard and impossible to be understood, he teaches the natural and reasonable religion which has but one rule, and this rule so obvious and simple that all know it, and need nothing but honesty to apply it. All know how they would be done by, and hence all know what to do to others.

I am amazed that you make so much account of Jackson's theological bundle, and of his being “an active member of the Presbyterian Church, of which he was a ruling Elder.” These, in your esteem, suffice to carry him straight to heaven. I had

supposed that your strong common-sense and large intelligence had long ago lifted you up out of the superstitious faith that any such things can carry any man to heaven. I had taken it for granted that you believed that it is his character, however induced—whether by himself or by Christ, or otherwise—that alone qualifies a man for heaven; so obvious is it, in the light of reason, that every man must go to his own place, and that what shall be his place must be determined, not by his theology, but by his character. But I was mistaken. For in the same breath in which you send Jackson to heaven, you argue out for him a thoroughly base and abominable character; even, to use your strong and eloquent words, a “comprehensive and fundamental degradation of heart and mind and soul.”

So, since it can not be in virtue of his character, it must be in virtue of his theology and ecclesiasticism, that you send Jackson to heaven. Or am I again mistaken? Perhaps you believe that the death of the body works moral changes; and that, though Jackson died with a bad character, he woke up with a good one.

But, notwithstanding I believe that our character in this life is that with which we begin the next, I have hope for “Stonewall” Jackson. And this hope for two reasons. First, I do not believe his character to be as bad as you make it. In many an instance, slaveholding does not deprave and debase the whole soul. Unconsciousness of its criminality, and a kindly exercise of its despotic power, are among the things which leave room for the growth of self-respect and other high virtues. Second, the Christ-religion will be more clearly seen, and more justly judged, in the next life; and mistaken and guilty, though still largely noble souls, like the “Stonewall” Jacksons, will hasten to exchange their miserable theologies for it. Nay, I trust that our Church-misled hero already begins to see more beauty and preciousness in the simple doctrine of doing as we would be done by, than in all the dogmas and prayers and rites of his corrupt and corrupting Church.

But I must stop. I meant to write only a few lines. How long, oh! how long, my great-souled brother, must we still wait for the open enlistment of your large powers against the theologies! I confess that you preach the religion of Jesus, and that you preach it with rare force and beauty. But, alas! how

is this preaching counteracted by your preaching the theologies also! The cause of truth can not afford to have Henry Ward Beecher continue to mix up traditional trash, or even traditional sweetness or sublimities, with that religion. She needs him to be wholly, and not but partly, on her side.

With great regard, your friend,

GERRIT SMITH.

FUNERAL DISCOURSE IN PETERBORO

JUNE 28, 1863.

THE following is the substance of a part of the argument in this discourse :

“Slowly, but surely, the progress of civilization is emancipating mankind from the theologies. God hasten the day when these huge and hoary structures, which have so long cast their baleful, blighting shadows over all the earth, shall be overthrown forever! God hasten the day when the soul-shriveling and degrading, theological, or superstitious age of the human family shall give place to its expanding and ennobling, rational, or scientific age!

The worst obstacles in the way of human improvement, are put there by the theologies. For instance, in Europe the Jewish theology stood out against astronomy. A remarkable fact, by the way, that Europe (and America also) instead of making a theology for herself, should adopt an Asiatic one! Astronomers were persecuted and stopped by this theology. Happily, however, they triumphed in the end. They proved that the earth, instead of being the principal body in the universe, is comparatively but a speck; and that the sun, moon, and stars are something more than mere candles for the earth. Enough has been proved to falsify the very first chapter of the Bible, and fling it upon the big heap of outgrown fables and follies. So too, did the Jewish theology stand out against geology. It stands out against it still. But it may as well strike its colors, for geology has gained the victory. This noble science has persevered in searching into the crust of the earth, until it has now found in various deposits, of a far earlier date than that at which the Jewish theology fixed the beginning of human existence, indisputable specimens of the work of man. What is more, they have also found here and there portions of the bodies of men, who must have lived long before the time when, according to the Bible, Adam was created.

One of the great battles yet to be fought with the theologies, is with their doctrine that God kills his children; and that when they get sick and die, or when they perish from the lightning, the earthquake, or the volcano, it is because He would have it so, and wills it to be so. So far, indeed, do the theologies go in this direction, as to affirm that God sends forth men to murder men. In the Jewish theology are found repeated instances of his commanding the wholesale slaughter of harmless women and innocent children. This theology makes him much more the Great Murderer than the Great Father of his children.

Now, reason teaches that God has given man a body which should grow and mature, and then continue to exist, subject only to the natural laws of decay and death. How long would be the earthly life of man, provided he had lived rightly in all his generations, we can not tell. It would probably be little less than twice the assumed three-score and ten years. It is for him to learn to live rightly; and he must meet the consequences of living wrongly. He must keep himself in health and in life. God will not do it for him. He must learn to read the warnings which nature gives of the earthquake and volcano, and to devise the utmost securities against thunderbolts and against accidents on land and water. He must learn how to cure disease, and, what is far more important, how to prevent it. What should be the house he dwells in, what his food, and drink, and dress, and other things which concern his health, should be his habitual, enlightened and earnest inquiry. Greatly deficient, however, in all this will he continue to be, until he shall deeply and effectually believe that not God, but only man, is responsible for premature death. The death, which concludes the natural wearing out of the body, is, we admit, of Divine arrangement. But never will man hold himself responsible for premature death, so long as he believes in a theology which teaches that death, be it in childhood or manhood, comes from the absolute and unevadable appointment of God. Not until he shall be sensible that premature death comes from man's crime, or from man's ignorance, (which, in the advancement of the world, becomes more or less criminal,) will he adequately resolve, or adequately guard against it: He must believe that such death can be prevented ere he will do all in his power to prevent it.

Bible fallacies, in regard to sickness and death, he must no more feel to be in his way than do astronomers and geologists now feel to be in their way those Bible fallacies which so long and so frowningly confronted them.

Very little is the physician worth who prescribes, subject to the consciously probable or even possible Divine decree, that his patients shall die. Of very little worth is any thing that is done for life or health, when it is done under the apprehension that it has to encounter such a Divine decree. We need to settle it in our minds that God wills no sickness and no shortening of life. He leaves it to ourselves whether to have or not have health, and whether to live or die. Whether man's life shall be prolonged, is conditioned on the care which man shall take of it. God has blessings for all and curses for none. He would have us all live out the natural period of life. It is no more his will that we should make no further progress in the knowledge of sheltering ourselves from sickness and death, than it was his will that our rate of travel, and of the transmission of messages should be but a few miles an hour, or than it was that the expense of making pictures of our faces for our children and friends, should exceed the means of the poor. It was his will that we should attain to far greater speed in the one case, and far greater cheapness in the other; and we have already executed his will so far, as to travel thirty or forty miles an hour, and to make the lightning our messenger, and the sun our painter. Moreover, he not only paints us for a shilling or two, but he paints us with an accuracy infinitely greater than can be done by the most expensive and skilful hand. It is God's will that we should make as swift progress in the department of health, as in any other department. Theology, not God, hinders our way. He has infinite helps and no hindrances for us.

The atheist, in his blindness and folly, tells us that there is no God—certainly no benevolent God—no father in heaven. A true God, according to his conceptions of him, would permit no sickness and no perils from storms, earthquakes, or volcanoes. But there is a God; and he proves his benevolence as well as his wisdom, not in dwarfing his children by doing every thing for them and leaving them nothing to do, but by requiring them to task to the utmost the large powers He has given them,

so that they may rise to immeasurable heights of wisdom and usefulness, grandeur and goodness. They should believe that, by such tasking of their powers from generation to generation, they would at last bring up man to be proof against diseases both of the body and the soul.

Alas, these theologies! What drags are they upon human advancement! How they hold our faces to the past! How they bind us in the habit of submission to precedent and authority! But for them, how much less, ere this time, of sickness and death? But for their influence upon character, Harvey's discovery of the circulation of the blood would not, as is so often said, have been rejected by all British physicians over forty years of age. But for this influence the physicians of Spain (the nation which, more than any other in Christendom, is in theological bonds) would not, for nearly two centuries, have rejected it. But for this influence the London physicians would not have vilified Jenner's discovery of the prevention of small-pox; nor would the London clergymen have denounced it from their pulpits as "diabolical." How swift the progress of the astronomer and geologist, now that they move on contemptuous of all theological opposition! What the physician needs in order to get abreast them is the like contemptuousness.

For the sake of every good thing do we need to get rid of the theologies, since it is in the way of every good thing that they all stand. Most of all do we need to get rid of them for the sake of religion. They are its mightiest hindrance. They are this mainly because, from their so plausibly and persistingly claiming to be religion, the popular mind comes to confound and identify them with religion. The theological sects do actually make the ridiculous story of Jonah and the whale an essential part of religion. They cling as closely to it as to the doctrine of doing as we would be done by. It is true that religion, which is simply justice toward God and man, is mixed up with the theologies; but they are no part of it. Especially true is it that religion is mixed up with the Jewish theology. Nowhere else is it taught so truly and so impressively as in the Bible—that collection of the highest inspirations which man was ever blessed with—that wondrous book worth more than all other books. This would be its preëminent value did

it nothing more than tell of Jesus — of that blessed one whom to know ; with whose spirit to be imbued ; with whose aims to be identified ; in whose principles to be established ; is eternal life.

Thanks mainly to science, light is fast breaking in upon the churches. It is fast streaking their very dense darkness. Thousands in them are convinced of the falseness and absurdity of the theologies. But whilst some of them are afraid that the expression of this conviction would damage their personal interests, others are afraid it would damage religion. Innumerable good persons fall in with the miserable policy of exempting the Bible from criticism, and contend that the book is too holy to be criticised — nay, that it is infidelity and blasphemy to criticise it. They suffer its false lines to be called true, for fear that, if they do not, others will call its true lines false. They are anxious to save the Bible. But they can not save it by such folly. It can be saved only by itself — only by its own truth — and that will save it. The best service that can be rendered to the Bible, is to rid it of its nonsense and falsehood ; to winnow the chaff from the wheat ; to separate the dross from the gold.

Very sad is it, that our religious teachers persist in inculcating and in exacting faith in every line of the Bible. They do this, notwithstanding they know that science has exploded parts of it. They do it, notwithstanding advancing knowledge has shaken their own faith in miracles and in such alleged facts as God's commanding the wholesale slaughter of the innocent, and putting Saul's wives into David's bosom. This persistency, as disgraceful and demoralizing to the teachers as it is darkening and deluding to their hearers, will not, however, last always. The day is coming when science shall have lifted up the human family to far higher planes, and when the office of the religious teacher will no longer be to uphold a theology and a superstition, but to preach the religion of reason and nature. This religion, which Jesus preached, will again be preached. Here and there it is now preached. Jesus will yet be known. As yet he is misunderstood. But in proportion as science scatters the theologies and the superstitions he will be understood."

THE

“CHRISTIAN CIRCULAR.”

PETERBORO, April 4, 1864.

REV. O. B. FROTHINGHAM :

MY DEAR SIR: My attention has been called to a paper entitled “Christian Circular.” It is dated New-York, March 21, 1864, and is numerously signed by clergymen of various denominations. I am not surprised at my failure to find amongst the names to it either your own or Dr. Cheever’s. O. B. Frothingham cares little for any of the theologies. It is the absolute religion which interests him. And G. B. Cheever would sooner consent to lose his life than be seen rallying men to his theology in circumstances which would make such rallying amount to an ignoring of any of the claims of the absolute religion.

Some say it is one thing, and some say it is another, which has most hindered human happiness. But, in after-ages — too probably in long after-ages — all will agree that nothing has so much obstructed the upward way of mankind as the substitution of historical and ecclesiastical religion for absolute religion, of conventional for natural religion, of merely local for the one universal religion — in a word, of man-made for God-made religion. It is customary for the nations to claim for their theology or bundle of dogmas, the credit of their advancement from lower to higher stages of civilization. But they should not. The credit should be given to religion. That the Mohammedan, or the Hindoo, or even the Christian theology has done great good is to be doubted. It is true that there is more or less of religion in them all. But this does not justify

the claim of their elevating influence on their respective nations. Least of all should that claim be set up in the light of the fact that there is so much in them all to neutralize religion. The good done by the Bible is beyond measurement. But this is owing to its happy inculcations of righteousness and love — not to the theological systems built upon it. It is religion — the religion taught in the Sermon on the Mount and elsewhere in the Bible — the religion of nature — the religion that is unchangeable and eternal, the same on earth and in heaven — it is this which does the good. Those things either in, or construed to be in, the Bible which find neither foundation nor response in nature, and which do to so great an extent make up both warp and woof of the Christian theologies do no good. No small evidence, by the way, that these theologies are hurtful is that generally they who make most account of them are the most destitute of religion. None, for instance, lay more stress upon them than the master-spirits in our Slave States. But amongst whom was there ever less religion? — that is, less regard for human rights and righteousness?

This "Christian Circular" to which I referred is a very striking and painful illustration of both the fact and the perniciousness of substituting an ecclesiastical or traditional religion for the natural or absolute religion.

For many reasons do I love New-York. Nevertheless, I am compelled to admit that she is a heathen city. Perhaps she is not more so than Philadelphia or Boston. However that may be, New-York is a heathen city. "*Colored persons allowed in these cars,*" implying the well-known fact that there are cars in New-York in which colored persons are not allowed, proves it to be a heathen city. The spirit of caste is the spirit of heathenism. The Christ-religion recognizes a brother or a sister under whatever skin and in whatever circumstances. The public sentiment, out of which grew her last July's assault upon her innocent colored people — an assault entirely unprovoked, and, for that reason amongst others, more depraved and more malignantly murderous than any the world had ever before seen — proves that she is a heathen city. Moreover, the public sentiment of New-York was mighty to encourage the Pro-Slavery Rebellion, which is wasting our wealth and shedding our blood. Indeed, but for their hope of vast and effective

sympathy in that city the rebels might not have ventured to go forward. But what was it that created this bad public sentiment? I will not say that it was the prevalence there of the ecclesiastic or dogmatic religions. I will however say that it would not have existed had the natural or absolute religion — the religion taught by the lips, and illustrated by the life of Jesus — been the only religion of her pulpits. Now, with such a public sentiment in New-York and with the diabolical crimes growing out of it, what the people of that city needed was not to be summoned by their clergymen, as they are in this “Christian Circular,” to a fresh faith in dogmas, in the Trinity, and in the Atonement; but to be reminded of the claims of religion, of the real religion, of the claims of the human brotherhood, and especially of that portion of it which is the most bruised and battered image of the Great Common Father. What they needed was to be made sensible that God’s great reckoning-day for the crime of American Slavery has come at last:—that England is required to suffer for her share in the crime, she having planted and helped sustain Slavery here; that our Northern States must suffer for having so persistingly and wickedly maintained it; and that our Southern States, guiltiest member of the partnership, must become little less than one desolation. What they needed was to be brought to repent of their sins against the black man, to help lift him up out of the depths into which they had helped to sink him; and then, in the name of the Father and the Son and of all humanity, to recognize the sublime and sacred rights of his crushed manhood. This is the way for the people of New-York to honor Jesus, who lived and died for the black man equally as for the white man. In their substituting for this duty fresh declarations of the Divinity and Atonement of Christ, they can but make themselves guilty of mere prating, if not indeed of stupendous hypocrisy. With well-nigh all their sins against the black man still upon them, and with little or no relaxation in their hatred, contempt, and persecution of him, the present is no time for the people of New-York to be crying in the words of this “Christian Circular,” “Jesus Christ the Mediator: very God” — no time for them to be crying, “Lord, Lord;” but the time to DO the will of that Lord’s “Father which is in heaven.”

Good men, even as good men as these who have signed this

“Christian Circular,” are, in consequence of their strong desire to uphold their dogmatic theology and their orthodox party, in danger of at least seeming to be disingenuous. What an amazing fact it is that this “Christian Circular,” in speaking of “our national troubles” and “our sins,” makes not even the slightest reference to Slavery! Indeed, since Slavery is not in its enumeration of “our sins,” it virtually denies that Slavery is a sin. For Americans to appoint a day of “fasting, humiliation, and prayer,” and to leave out Slavery from the list of the sins that prompted the appointment, is most emphatically a case to be likened to the playing of Hamlet with the part of Hamlet left out. But doubtless the great majority of the Church-members of New-York are Pro-Slavery. How, then, could the “Christian Circular” have succeeded in rallying them to a united faith and a united service, had it included Slavery in its enumeration of “our sins”? I admit that unity as well as truth is a good. But how lamentable that for the sake of gaining unity, truth should so often be sacrificed?

Shall these theologies that have crazed and cursed all the generations of men ever come to an end? Never, but on the fulfilling of either one of two conditions. In the first place, they will come to an end when they shall cease to be confounded with religion, and cease to be regarded as religion. Christ sums up the one true religion in doing as you would be done by. He makes it so simple that even “babes” can understand it. Paul says it requires nothing but, “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself;” Micah, nothing “but to do justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God;” and Jeremiah says of a good man: “He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well with him: was not this to know me? saith the Lord.” When such definitions of religion shall have come to obtain everywhere, there will then be no more room in the world for the theologies or the theological seminaries. Then the young man who buys a spade to tax his muscles with will be held to be wiser and more truly and usefully learned than the young man who buys a theological book to tax his brains with. In the second place, these theologies will come to an end whenever the law of evidence shall be applied to their foundations. Test them as you test other mere assumptions, and at once they

“Are melted into air, into *thin* air.”

Where, for instance, is there proof—such proof as the law of evidence can respect—that the wonders on which the Christian theologies are based were miracles, that is, suspensions of natural laws, or if not such, that they seemed to be such—to be natural impossibilities? But, more than this, where is there evidence amounting to proof, or to any thing like proof, that the wonders occurred? Not only is their miraculous or seemingly miraculous character unproved; but even so much as that they took place is unproved. For instance, there is neither proof that Jesus reanimated a dead body, nor that he did any thing out of which the tradition grew. It should always be borne in mind that evidence of a very extraordinary thing must, to amount to proof, be of a very high character for certainty. The court records without hesitation the testimony of the witness that he saw a man die. But if he adds that he saw the dead body go up into the clouds of heaven, he will have to bring more than all his neighbors to confirm the additional testimony.

It is true that we receive on very slender evidence, so far indeed as we do receive them, the wonders recorded in Grecian and Roman histories. This we can afford. But in regard to the evidence of those Jewish wonders, which we are so foolish as to let enter into the very foundations of our religion, we can not afford to be careless and easy.

Very sad is it, that in all probability many ages will elapse before the theologies will pass away. For, in the first place, not only is there a deep and an honest conviction in the priesthood that the theologies are Religion, but there is a mighty interest there to keep up the theologies. When these shall fall the occupation of the priesthood will be gone. Preachers, I admit, will still be needed. But men who are not versed in the theologies can then be preachers. In the second place, the struggle between science and superstition, though sure to end in the success of science, can not fail to be very protracted. The people must be trained to the certainties of science, and to the consequent rejection of every faith which does not rest upon a basis of adequate evidence, ere they will have courage to sit in judgment upon the theological superstitions. It does not suffice that there is here and there a scientific man who sees how baseless are the theological fabrics. For he will not say

what he sees, at the expense of making himself singular and odious. But when science shall be so diffused that her outspoken lecturers can everywhere find large and, what is more, paying audiences, then these theological superstitions will be upon their last legs; then the gullet of the popular credulity will fast contract, and such *whopping* stories as the Flood, and the dry path through the Red Sea, and Methuselah's living nine hundred and sixty-nine years, and the standing still of the sun and moon, and Jonah and the whale, and the dead coming to life, will no longer be swallowed.

That men should so almost universally believe in the theologies is not at all strange. They are compelled to believe in them. For, from early childhood they are taught that they must believe in them or perish. So is it both in Heathendom and Christendom. I do not forget that our Christian teachers invite us to examine for ourselves the theology which they commend to us, and to decide for ourselves whether it is or is not true. But with their views of the necessity and helplessness under which we lie in this case, ought they not to look upon this invitation as a trifling with us?—nay, as a somewhat malignant mockery of our bondage and impotence? I admit that there is a show of fairness in their telling us to reason the matter for ourselves. But even this disappears in the light of the fact that they make everlasting burnings the penalty of our failure to reach their conclusions. It is right to insist that drunkards, thieves, and murderers shall look upon their crimes as we do:—in a word, that all unjust men shall see justice. Nature bids this. But she does not bid them believe in the theologies and in their magic processes of salvation. This is virtually admitted by all who hold that the light of nature is insufficient by which to discern the truth of their theology, and that the lack must be supplied by special interposition or revelation.

The priesthoods have always made unhesitating and unqualified faith in the theologies a high merit. They are counted the worthiest disciples who believe quickest and believe most. "Only believe—only believe!" the priests exclaim. But they seem to forget that God requires us to be as obedient to the law of evidence as to any other law. It *may* be wrong for a man to reject a particular dogma of the Christian Theology. But it

certainly is wrong for him to accept it before he has gone to the pains of proving it.

How easy it is to believe what is on our side and to reject what is on the other! Believers in the theologies promptly and indignantly reject the facts on which spiritualists base their system of faith. Nevertheless, amongst the witnesses to these facts are multitudes whom they personally know to be intelligent and truthful. On the other hand, though not knowing who it was that saw the more wondrous facts in their theologies, nor indeed that any one saw them, they yet believe them, and have little patience with those who disbelieve them. Perhaps, notwithstanding the immense amount of testimony in their favor, these facts in Spiritualism ought not to be believed. Certain, however, is it that they who, on grounds far too uncertain to deserve the name of testimony, believe far greater marvels, should not laugh at the credulity of the spiritualists.

Believers in the theologies are guilty of believing not only without but against proof; not only without the approval of reason and nature, but in the face of both. Their belief, which passes for wisdom and merit, is but folly and sin. Their belief, instead of saving them, hinders far more than it helps the salvation which comes alone of the simple religion of love and righteousness. This simple religion is cherished by multitudes who still cling to the theologies, as well as by multitudes who have flung away those fanciful, whimsical, and absurd productions of ignorance and superstition. Thanks to the Great and Good Father, that his simple religion can live in connection with both credulity and skepticism, and can glow in the bosoms both of those who believe too much and of those who believe too little. Let this fact, so abundantly witnessed, serve to bring these parties into the exercise of charity toward each other.

With great regard, your friend,

GERRIT SMITH.

